

A
LETTER

TO the REVEREND

Mr. *Thomas Reynolds,*

ON

Occasion of a PASSAGE in his
FUNERAL-SERMON for the late
Pious Mr. POMFRET, and his
PREFACE to it.

By *SIMON BROWNE.*

The SECOND EDITION corrected, with a Postscript.

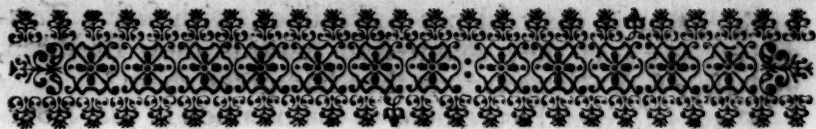
The Church's Peace or Unity must not be laid on any bare Words of Man's devising. It's not a Work for Councils or Prelates (and I add, for any others) to form the Christian Doctrine in new Methods and Terms, and then to force Others to subscribe or use those very Terms. If the same Men that refuse this, be willing to subscribe to the whole Scripture, or to a Confession in Scripture Words, you may force them to no more. Baxt. Key for Catholics, p. 449. Edit. 1659. 4to.

L O N D O N :

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ERRATA.

PAge 4, line 16. for *though*, r. *but*. p. 6, l. 7. for *make*, r. *made*.
p. 20, l. ult. for *into*, r. *in to*. p. 26, l. 12. for *Title*, r. *Tittle*. l. 9.
for *thev*, r. *they*. p. 39, l. 19. r. *Purposes*. p. 47, l. 16. for *hear*, r. *have*.




A

LETTER

To the REVEREND

Mr. Thomas Reynolds, &c.

S I R,

HEN you have given your self the *Liberty*, on Occasion of the Death of the late Reverend Mr. *Pomfret*, to revive the Memory of a Difference, among the Ministers in this City, and complement his Congregation at the Cost of your Brethren, and to the manifest Reproach of a great Number of them, you cannot be surprized, if one of this Number, takes the *Liberty* of expostulating with you thereupon.

WHY might not the *Ashes* of that good Man (whose eminent Piety was as highly valued by every one of us, as by any of you who subscribed with him) have remained at Rest? Why must his Name and Memory be made Use of, to feed the Fire of Contention, and blow up a new Flame? Was it his Judgment that the *Nonsubscribers* should be pelted from the Pulpit, and the Rage of the People be stirred up against them, in *Funeral Sermons* or *Fast* ones? Did he ever recommend any Thing of this Kind by his own Example? If ought like this be insinuated, I must declare, in your Words, "Nothing can be more false, and, " had he been living, nothing would have grieved him " more, than such an *unworthy* and *injurious* Reflection." I believe you your self know, but if you do not, many of your Brethren, and several of his own People know, that how much soever he approved the Subscription, yet he *abhorred* the Methods, by which too many of his subscribing Brethren, endeavoured to keep the Division open. He has wept over their uncharitable Spirit and Conduct, and, with his usual Fervency asked some, how they durst look G O D

in the Face, in their solemn Assemblies, with such a *Temper of Mind* as they manifested towards their Brethren, and after such *Treatment* as they had given them?

THAT such an Expression, as you mention in your * Sermon, concerning his *nonsubscribing Brethren*, might possibly drop from him, we can persuade our selves to believe. Men of as much Piety, and a much cooler Temper, *have spoken unadvisedly with their Lips*. But we can very difficultly believe that he gave it in Charge to have it told to his Commendation in a Funeral Sermon, that he *had pronounced* his Brethren *left of GOD*, for not signing the *Roll at Salter's-Hall*, much less to have it told with so solemn an Air, to make Impression on the Audience to the Prejudice of his Brethren. Indeed none but the weakest Part of any Audience can be impress'd with such a Story, though this is commonly the greatest Part of every one. I hope you don't think he uttered this *fine Saying* under Inspiration. And if he only spoke his private Sentiments, it is no affront to his Understanding, nor, I hope, to yours, to suppose he might be mistaken. He was indeed animated with an uncommon Zeal for GOD, but he was a *Man of like Passions* with others. And it is no Wonder he should say a *silly Thing* in an *Heat*, when you can do as *silly* a Thing in *cold Blood* as to publish it, and lay such a Stress on it, if indeed you are ever cool on this Subject.

It was certainly a very rash Thing to utter such a *Speech*, if he did utter it, and was not mistaken by *that Brother* who was deputed to wait upon him with *the Roll*. He had heard none of the Debates in the Assembly, and if that Brother made any *Reports* of them, great Allowances must surely be made for Representations carried to some Distance, when even upon the Spot, it once happened, that the Sound of a State of the Question *committed to Writing* was hardly out of the Ears, but it was mistaken by a Brother that you know, and quite changed. Such is the Frailty of human Nature, and so fallible our *Memories*, when our Minds are inlaid with Prejudice, or we are resolved on a Point.

NOR would it be a Matter of any Difficulty for us, to confront *this* Story with *others* on our Side, much more worthy of Regard. We could tell you of *Nonsubscribers* (Men of as much Judgment and Discretion at least, and no less Piety than good Mr. *Pomfret*) who after many and serious Reviews of their Conduct, in the Face of Death and Eternity, were so far from thinking themselves *forsaken of GOD* in what they did at *Salter's-Hall*, that they were

persuaded they must have betrayed *all their Rights* as Men and Christians, and acted in Contradiction to *all their Principles* as Protestants and Dissenters, had they subscribed as you would have had them, and had much Satisfaction in the Part they took in that Debate. This you may possibly think their *Weakness*, if you do not ascribe it to what is worse. But may not others, with as much Reason, attribute this Saying of Mr. *Pomfret* to his Indiscretion? Unless after all the Acknowledgments made of your poor Capacities, there yet can be no Mistake on *your Side* the Question.

BUT it is not the *Saying* of a Man on either Side, be he *wise* or *weak*, that must determine whether *you* or *we* were in the Right, but the Merits of the Cause. And to tell such Stories with so much Solemnity, is not *Argument* but *Artifice*. It is *ad captandum Populum*. For you very well know, that the Bulk of Mankind, are much more impress'd by an *Aphorism* utter'd by one they love and reverence, than they can be convinced and influenced by the best *Arguments* and *soundest Reason* in the World.

AND as to that * *other Saying* of his to the Brother deputed with the Roll, and on which you lay such a Stress, viz. *that if he had a thousand Hands he would employ them all in bearing Testimony* (in the same Way, I suppose) to *this Truth*, it is to me all *Noise* and *Bounce*: For had he had *ten thousand* Hands to be thus employed, it would have been the single Subscription and Testimony of one individual Man, and no more.

I KNOW none that ever insinuated that this good Man retracted his Subscription. Nor can I think it to be of much Importance, whether he did or not. But I am fully persuaded *this Part* of his *Character* might have been omitted without any *Prejudice* to his Reputation, and is inserted without any Advantage to *yours*. Mr. *Smith* has avoided touching on this Matter in Mr. *Rosewell's* Character, as has Mr. *Harris* in that of Mr. *Billingsley*. And this is the most proper Way to have the Quarrel die. But you perhaps think it *prudent* and *christian* to keep it alive. For this *yours* is the proper Method. And, should both Sides give into it, the Death of a good Man, on either Side, which should humble us all, must give new Life to our Animosities, till this Generation are all gone off the Stage. This may be a very prudent Method to serve *some Purposes*, but much *christian Prudence*, I think, would not be in it: Sure I am, there would be very little *christian Charity*.

BUT I return from this Part of the good Man's Character in the *Sermon*, to the Complement made his People in the *Preface*. You are glad, it seems, of an Opportunity to take Notice of their *prudent* and *christian* Conduct in the Choice of another Minister, and *cannot but record it to their Honour*. And you might have taken what Notice you pleased of it, and make it look as much to their Honour as you could, without any Interruption from me, had not *their* Commendation been made an Handle for censuring and reproaching *your Brethren*. Had you only given your Approbation to Persons who seem to be of your Mind, and, perhaps, were willing to act under your Direction, no great Harm had been done. Yet many would have thought this as great a Complement to *your Self* as to *Them*. It is burning Incense to them, that your self may be *regaled* and *perfumed* with its Fragancy. But it is an extraordinary Step, out of Complaisance to them, to fall on your *Brethren* with so fervent a Zeal, and such severe Insinuations, and, as they think, with *so little Reason*: Unless they could allow themselves to believe, you had more Regard to the *Art* of a *Party-Man*, than the *Candor* and *Charity* of a *Christian Brother* and *Minister*.

BUT seeing you have taken Occasion to tack your Censures of your Brethren to your Commendations of this People, I hope you will allow me to look a little into the Sense and Justice of the Compliments made to *Them*, before I proceed to the Reflections thrown on us.

YOU tell them you reckon it *somewhat providential*, that by delaying the Publication of your Sermon, *you have an Opportunity to take Notice of the prudent and christian Methods taken by them to secure a regular and sound Ministry amongst them*. What is meant by a *regular Ministry* in this Passage, and what Methods have been taken to secure such a Ministry among this People, I know not. They might *consult and advise with* each other, and *inform themselves of the Character and Principles of those they had their Eye upon*, and agree that *whoever was intrusted with the Care of their Souls, should give them Satisfaction in their Way about his own Faith*, (which are all the prudent Methods you mention as taken by them to secure a regular Ministry) and after all have settled in a *Lay-Brother*. Whether you would have taken this for a *regular Ministry*, or whether that and a *sound one*, may not, with you, be all one, I know not. *Orthodoxy* I know will atone for many *Irregularities*, and, I fear, for some *Immoralities* too. A Zealot may lay Snares for a Brother in Conversation, undermine his Interest with his Hearers, and, till he has ripened

pened his Design, profess great Respect and Esteem, and no manner of Intention to do him Harm; and when he has artfully wrought up the People to his Purpose, get him ejected at once, and perhaps after all wipe his own Mouth, and throw all the Blame on the People. If Zeal for the Faith will not *cover a Multitude of such Sins*, Multitudes of Zealots in all Ages have been *very wrong* in their *Conduct*, however right they have been in their *Principles*.

BUT what were the *prudent and christian* Methods taken by this People to secure a *sound* Ministry amongst them? They sought *GOD* together in a solemn Manner, they have taken reasonable Time to consult and advise with one another, and they have informed themselves, as they had Opportunity of the Character and Principles of such as they had their Eye upon. Hitherto I see nothing unchristian or imprudent in their Conduct. But when you add, they also agreed that whoever had the Care of their Souls intrusted with him, should give them Satisfaction concerning his own Faith, † in that Way and Manner which they thought necessary to desire, I am not clear that it was either *prudent or christian*. Surely there may be Ways of requiring this Satisfaction thought necessary by a People, that are neither just nor reasonable, neither agreeable to their Rights as Men or Christians, such as neither ought to give Peace on Reflection, nor are fit to be imitated, how many Thousands soever may follow the Example, and in which to comply with their Demands may be neither *Prudent nor Christian*. The particular Way and Manner wherein this People thought necessary to bring their present Minister to the Test, you have not thought fit particularly [*and expressly*] to communicate. You knew it seems and approved it. And they were well enough assured you would commend it too, when you should be called to do it in a *proper Manner*. As every Man will what he likes, and is conformable to his own Sentiments. They will always act as *wise Men and good Christians*, who act as you shall think fit to direct or approve.

BUT the Case opens as you proceed. They have chosen for their Pastor, one who has acknowledged their Right to act as they have done. And, if you may be Judge, it was right in him to make this Acknowledgment. But if all was required by this People as necessary to their Satisfaction, that you tell us Mr. Denham has done, it will at least be very doubtful to me. What he has done *mero Motu propriæ Voluntatis*, voluntarily, and without Solicitation or Demand, is nothing to me or any Man. He was Master

† That it was Sound and Orthodox, I suppose, you mean.

of himself and his own Acts. But if *they* demanded all, you tell us, *he* has done (which is the most obvious Meaning of what you say on this Head) I cannot think they had *any Right* as *Men* or *Christians* to make such a Demand, whatever Acknowledgment *He* may have made of it.

THEY had, it seems, *informed themselves, as they had Opportunity, of his Character and Principles.* And I dare say they had upon this Information no Ground to suspect him. No Charge exhibited against him as to his Faith. What need, then, was there of clapping the Test on him, and putting him on a Purgation?

BESIDES, when he came to Town, he *declared himself in the Pulpit in as strong, plain and unexceptionable Terms as could be wished, for the ever blessed Trinity in Opposition to the Arian Heresy.* But this would not satisfy; More was still necessary. He must also give it under his Hand. For what Reason? Because it seems this was a *prudent Method* to secure a *sound Ministry* among this People. But what Security, I beseech you, could they have under his Hand, greater than he had already given? If he put a Cheat on them *in the Pulpit*, might he not also do it *on a Piece of Paper*? Or was it *just and reasonable*, after he had declared himself from the Pulpit in so unexceptionable a Manner, that he should be farther required to do it under his Hand? Was not this perfectly needless? And is it any Point of *human or christian Prudence* to *insist upon a needless Thing*? Or how will you make it out that a Body of Men or Christians have a *Right to be impertinent*?

YOU say he *declared himself in the Pulpit, and under his Hand, in as plain, strong and unexceptionable Terms as could be wished.* Were these Terms those of the *Article and Answers*? This had been told * plainly, I am apt to think, had it been Matter of Fact. A Man I perceive may pass Muster then, though he do not sign *the Roll*, if he will but do what is of *equal Validity*, that is, what you are pleased to think so. This is great Condescension, I confess.

OR, were the *unexceptionable Terms* referred to, *Scripture ones*? I hope *God has declared himself in Holy Scripture, for the ever blessed Trinity in Opposition to the Arian Heresy in Terms as strong, plain and unexceptionable.* If not, I am sure you are guilty of great Presumption in laying this Doctrine at the Foundation of every Minister's Hope of Heaven. If he has, why may not a *Declaration in Scripture Terms* satisfy as to the *Soundness* of a Man's Faith? Is it for the Honour of Holy Scripture, or its

* That is, in express Terms.

Author, to insinuate, *by insisting on a Declaration in other Terms, that he has not taken Care to express the Faith of his Church in Terms sufficiently plain, strong and unexceptionable*, but left this to the better Care of frail and fallible Men, and that in Points which must *be laid as the Foundation of all our future Hopes?*

OR were these *unexceptionable Terms* his own, and of his *own chusing*? Those he used in the Pulpit, doubtless, were. And, for any Thing appears, such might those also be, to which he set his Hand. And this being supposed, why such a Clamour against your *Nonsubscribing Brethren*? Have any of them made a Difficulty of declaring themselves, when they thought themselves *called to it in a proper Manner*, and were left to *the Choice of their own Terms*? Have we not declared our selves from the *Pulpit*, and many of us from the *Press*, with our Hands to what we have published? Did we not declare in a Body at *Salter's-Hall*, that *we did utterly disown the Arian Doctrine, and sincerely believe the Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, and the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we apprehend to be clearly delivered in the Holy Scriptures?* These are *Terms plain, strong and unexceptionable*; but whether as plain, strong and unexceptionable as *can be wished for*, I cannot say. I doubt when this comes to be explained, it must stand for Terms as plain, strong and unexceptionable as *you can wish for*. And then the Amount of all is, that Mr. *Denham* has declared himself in Terms to *your liking*. And doubtless the People acted agreeably to *all their Rights as Men and Christians*, and deserve to have it recorded to *their Honour*, when they required a Minister before they would accept him for *their Minister*, to declare his Faith in the Trinity in Terms that would please Mr *Reynolds, &c.* This ought to give them great *Peace on Reflection*, and Thousands, no doubt, will think it an Example most fit to be imitated.

I HOPE after all this Complaisance, the People were abundantly satisfied. I, for my Part, should have thought I had *supererrogated and done much more than was necessary*, toward their Satisfaction. But if what you tell us has been done, must have been done, and was thought fit and necessary by this People to their Satisfaction, he was to go a much greater Length. He must not only *for the present* declare his Belief, &c. but also solemnly declare (whatever Reasons he may hereafter see to alter his Apprehensions) That *he will steadily adhere to it, as the Foundation on which he builds all his Hopes of eternal Happiness, and that he will be ready at all Times, when called to it in*

a proper Manner, to give reasonable Proofs of this steady Adherence, and that both by preaching, defending and subscribing it. Many Things need to be cleared up ere I shall be brought to think, any Congregation have a Right to demand all this, for their Satisfaction concerning a Minister's Faith. * I will take the Liberty of enlarging on one or two Particulars, and point out several more that need much to be cleared up, before you venture to assert, or at least before you are to be regarded in asserting, that any People have a Right to make these Demands. As,

(1. First,) Who must have this Satisfaction? Without Doubt, they, and only they, who have a Right to demand it. But who are these? Is every one in the Congregation to be satisfied; or only some particular Persons who are to judge, and chuse for the Rest? Or are they as a Body to chuse some *Triers* of *Orthodoxy*, in whose Judgment they are all to acquiesce, and in whose Report they are to rest satisfied? I doubt not but this Method would please best, where you are sure of your Men, and to have *Triers* chosen to your own Taste. This is playing the Game into our own Hands. But in all Reason they can have no Right to demand Satisfaction, † who are not of Capacity to receive it.

[And such Capacity they manifestly want, who do not know what is Orthodox Belief, in the Point concerning which Satisfaction is demanded, nor can distinguish between Truth and Error, or right Apprehension and wrong. Every one therefore, before he can have a Right to demand this Satisfaction, must himself be a right Believer. That is, he must have a right Understanding of the Doctrine, know the Grounds on which he believes it, and be able to distinguish between Truth and Error.] (Unless a Man may have a right Faith without right Notions and Apprehensions, or without understanding or perceiving the Grounds of his Faith.) The Remembrance or Recital of *orthodox Terms* and *Phrases* is no sufficient Evidence of an *orthodox Faith*, unless their Meaning be well and rightly apprehended. It is very possible for a Man to talk after a *System*, or a *Catechism*, or an *established Article*, and subscribe to all, without putting a *right Meaning* to the Words, or indeed without any Meaning at all. I am very much out (and I own this is very possible) if somewhat like this be not your own Case, and that of others of our subscribing Brethren, after all your Zeal for Subscriptions and Clamour against *Nonsubscribers*.

* viz. That it is sound and orthodox.

† viz. That a Minister

AND as it is necessary that every one in a Congregation should *himself* be *orthodox*, and have a Capacity of distinguishing Truth from Error, before he can have a Right to bring a Minister to the Test; * so is it fit and necessary this should be known before *he claims* this Right, at least before it be *allowed* him. He ought to give Satisfaction of his *own* Orthodoxy, before he can demand such a Thing from a Minister. A Congregation is not in this Case to be lumped, nor is this a Matter to be taken upon Content. If any in a Congregation either do not rightly understand the Doctrine of the Trinity, or are not known to do so, it is a very unrighteous Thing, for *their Brethren* in the Congregation, or any appointed *Triers*, to demand Satisfaction in *their Name* concerning a Minister's Faith, [or *Orthodoxy*, in this Article.] It is making a Claim, where there is no Right to support it, at least no *known* or *apparent* Right, which is much the same.

UNLESS therefore you had Satisfaction upon *due Trial* and *Enquiry*, that every one in that numerous Congregation, were right and sound Believers, and that upon right Grounds, in the Points relating to the Trinity, you are much too positive when you pronounce what they have done, in requiring Satisfaction from their Minister on this Head, *agreeable to all their Rights as Men and Christians, and what you are sure ought to give them Peace on Reflection*. For sure I am, that the doing an *unrighteous Thing* ought to give no Man, or Body of Men, Peace upon Reflection. And are you sure upon *due Trial*, no *such Thing* was done? No Satisfaction as to the Minister's Faith, required in the Name of any, but what were true Believers, and had right Apprehensions concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, and these rightly founded, I mean upon *Scripture Evidence*, and not barely *human Authority*? I would not be uncharitable, but doubt you spared your self these Pains, and because the People had an high Esteem of *your* Orthodoxy, you took it upon Content that *they* had right Apprehensions, and *believed*, at least, *as the Church believed*. And because hereupon they acted as you would have them, they did what was *just* and *reasonable*, &c. what you will *record to their Honour*, and *your own*, no Doubt, who had some Share in this very wise and righteous Conduct.

IT is very manifest to me, that, before you can *justly plead* for a Congregation's Right, to demand Satisfaction concerning a Minister's Faith in *any Point*, you must be sure they *have* such a Right. That is, that they have *right Ap-*

* viz. To know whether he be so.

prekensions concerning this Point, and are capable of discerning and distinguishing between what is right and wrong. The *Test* should therefore be carried through the Congregation, before, *in their Name*, it be brought to the Minister. Nor will it be enough to say, Sir, *will you subscribe?* Madam, *will you subscribe?* Subscription is often a *Cover* to *Ignorance*, nay, and *Heresy*, and it is the common Sanctuary and Retreat of *Laziness* and *implicit Faith*. But the Enquiry must be carried into what every one thinks concerning the *Trinity*, as well as how he speaks about it. That it may be known *what Sense* they agree in, as well as *what Sounds*. Nay, in a Point on which *all the Hopes of eternal Happiness* stands, the *Test*, one would think, should be put to every one in the Congregation, before he be admitted to chuse a Minister. For he can never have a Right to chuse a *Christian Minister*, who is not himself a *Christian Man*, and he can be no Christian, all whose Hopes of eternal Salvation are without Foundation.

I KNOW not how far these Sentiments of *mine* may agree with *yours*, or how far you may think such a Thing practicable; but a Friend of mine and yours, upon starting the Thought, was pleased to say, he should think *you* and *your Brethren* much more in earnest for the Faith, than he now takes you to be, if you, who are for clapping the *Test* at every Turn on *your Brethren*, would carry it through your *several Congregations*, and purge from them *great and small, rich and poor*, that are not sound Believers, that is, all who have not a *right Faith*, or, which in my Account is all one, have not *right Apprehensions*, or cannot *rightly distinguish* between *Truth* and *Error* in this Matter. But,

(2. *Secondly.*) WHAT is the *Point*, the present Point, in which a People are to be satisfied as to the Faith of their Minister! *The Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity*, in Opposition to the *Arian Heresy*? But is the *Arian* the only Heresy here to be opposed and guarded against? May not a Man declare himself for the *Doctrine*, &c. and yet be all the while as great an Heretic? May he not be a *Tritheist*, a *Sabellian*, or *Socinian*, if these two last do indeed differ, and yet oppose *Arianism*? To maintain *Three Gods* equally supreme and co-ordinate, is as great an Error as to assert *one* supreme, and two subordinate. And to hold the Trinity to be *one Hypostasis*, only under *three Names* or *Denominations*, has been always deemed equally heretical. But a Man may oppose *Arianism*, and yet be in one of these opposite Extremes.

Now what End can it answer, for a People to demand Satisfaction, concerning a Minister's Faith of the Trinity, in
Oppo-

Opposition to one Error, when, this notwithstanding, he may be in as great an Error? May a Man be safely intrusted with the Care of Souls, though he holds other Errors about the Trinity, provided they be not *Arian*? Are these the only ones that destroy the Foundations of our future Hopes? May a Man, who is a *Sabellian* or *Tritheist*, build on a sure Foundation, though one who is an *Arian* cannot? And if not, do a People do what is *just and reasonable*, and perfectly agreeable to all their Rights as Men and Christians, &c. who acquiesce in a Minister's declaring his Faith, in Opposition to *Arian* Heresy, without any Concern to avoid the opposite Errors? Or can he be other than a *weak Minister*, who will build all his Hopes on such a Foundation? Surely Mr. *Denham* has too much Sense, to make such a Declaration now, or bind himself for the future, at all Times to *preach, defend and subscribe* it. Possibly this was not what you intended to say, but I can make no other Construction of your Words. *He has engaged*, you tell us, *steadily to adhere* to this Doctrine. To *what Doctrine*, but his *Belief of the ever blessed Trinity*, in Opposition to the *Arian Heresy*? I can find no other *Antecedent* to which your Relative *this* can refer.

BUT there is another Passage of yours elsewhere upon this Argument, that renders it highly probable at least, that I do not mistake you here. There you tell us, that **if Men were but humble, sensible of their lost Condition, concerned for their Salvation, &c. they would not imagine it to be of no great Moment, which Side of the Question is held in the present Controversy. What Controversy? Why, whether the Son and Holy Spirit be of the same undivided Nature with the Father?* This being held to, you have no Concern, that I can find, *what Notions Men have of the Persons in the Godhead, nor any Controversy with those who hold no Distinction of Persons in it at all.* Nay, I cannot see, but, in this Way of stating the Question, these last must, in your Account, be *most orthodox*. For they who maintain the *Son and Spirit* to be the same *Hypostasis* with the *Father*, must most firmly hold them to be of the same *undivided Nature*. With these you can have no Quarrel about the *Object of Worship*. They certainly make no *Difference in Nature*. They worship Father, Son and Holy Ghost in the self-same *Hypostasis*, and therefore to be sure *in the same undivided Nature*, which with you is the turning Point in the present Controversy about the Trinity. You can compound the Matter therefore with the *Sabellians*, that is (as I think)

with the *Socinians*, to be sure with the whole Body of the *English Unitarians*. They will readily concur with you in *opposing the Arians*, and maintaining *that the Son and Spirit are of the same undivided Nature with the Father*.

I DOUBT not, but you will here crave Leave to be understood, of the Controversy with the *Arians*, and avow that this turns on the *single Question*, *whether the Son and Spirit are of the same undivided Nature with the Father*. *Socinians* and *Sabellians*, you will say, are out of the *present Question*. They are not, at this Time, moving any Controversy about the Trinity, But surely the Controversy with the *Arians* is not *merely* whether Father, Son and Spirit are of the same undivided Nature, but whether they are *three Persons* in the same undivided Nature. And in managing a Controversy with the *Arians*, I think you have as much Concern to guard against the contrary Extreme; or the *Socinians* will certainly make the Advantage of it. And by such a State of the Question you give them a fair Opportunity. Not to observe, that your Undertaking, according to the *Title of your Book*, is to state and defend *the Doctrine of the blessed Trinity*, and not merely the Doctrine of it *in Opposition to Arians*, and under that Limitation only.

YOU may tell me you cannot be supposed to be in *their Sentiments*, because you signed the Roll at *Salter's-Hall*, and have made a mighty Bustle to get it signed by every Body else: And there Father, Son and Spirit are asserted to be *three Persons*. We are also told in the State of the Doctrine, to which you have annexed some sage Advices, that by Persons you *do not* mean * *three Names only*. But till you tell us what you *do* mean, you may for any thing I know, be within the Confines of Heresy still. Our *English Unitarians* make no Scruple of calling them *three † Persons*, provided this be understood of *three Attributes*, or *three Modes of Deity*, or *three external Relations of God to his Creatures*, or *three internal Relations of God to himself*, called *relative Subsistences*, that is, provided it be understood of *Properties, Affections or Characters* of the same numerical Spirit or Being. How does it appear, tho' your three Persons are more than three mere Names, that you mean any thing more by the Term than *they*? What is *that Doctrine of the Trinity*, that you think must be laid at the Foundation of all a Minister's Hopes of Heaven?

* Doctrine of Trinity stated and defended, p. 21. † Agreement of Unitarians with Catholic Church, p. 32, 33. See also Nye's Letters, Institutions, Answer to Dr. Clark. Passim.

Is it the Doctrine of * *three distinct intelligent Natures*, in the Godhead, *with each its proper Personality belonging to it*? This you know was the Sentiment of that great Divine and eminent Christian, the late Mr. *Howe*. This I understand will not fit your Taste. It seems you require Candidates for the Ministry to disown this great Man's Sentiments, e're you will certify they are fit to be employed. And who can doubt but the same Man, had he been as wise and zealous for the Truth, and in the same Place and Consideration in which he apprehends himself at present, when Mr. *Howe* passed his Trials, would have made the same Demands on him, or dismissed him without the Favour of his Hand? Who can doubt, but, if the People who sat under that great Man's Ministry, had consulted him before the Choice, he would have dissuaded their entrusting their Souls to his Care, and have recorded it to their Honour, that they took his Advice? And would not the People have been exceedingly obliged to you for such *christian* and *prudent* Counsel? Doubtless they would. And *Thousands*, no doubt, would have thought *their Example most worthy* their Imitation. How modest a Man does Mr. *Reynolds* appear in this Light, and what a grateful Veneration doth he pay to that great Man's Memory!

AND what renders this Modesty more singular and conspicuous is, that Mr. † *Howe* apprehended his to be the common Sentiments of the Fathers, *Nicene*, *Ante-nicene*, and *Post-nicene*, down to *Peter Lombard* in the twelfth Century, whom a great Divine, as he tells us, used to call one of the four *Evangelists* of Antichrist.

AND Dr. *Cudworth*, in his ** *Intellectual System*, has collected a great deal of Evidence, from the *Nicene* Fathers, to this Purpose. He particularly shews us from *Theodoret*, that it was the Doctrine of the Fathers, that *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις*, or *Essence* and *Person*, differ from each other, as *Common* and *Proper*, or *Genus* from *Species* and *Individuum*. *† *Basil* also speaks to the same Purpose. He farther informs us, that *Gregory of Nyssa*, *Cyril of Alexandria*, *Maximus the Martyr*, and *John Damascene*, make the three *Hypostases* as much *Individuals* under the *Species* of Godhead, as *Peter*, *James* and *John*, under the *Species* of Manhood. And to reconcile this with the Unity, maintain that three Men are but *improperly* and *abusively* thus called; they being truly *but one*, because of the same *specific* Nature in them all. Indeed, as he tells us, thus to

* *Howe's Enquiry*, p. 126. † *View of the Considerations*, p. 58, 59.

** From p. 601, to 620. *† "Ὅτι ὅν ἔχει λόγον, τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον τοῦτο ἔχει ἡ οὐσία πρὸς τὴν ὑπόστασιν.

account for the Unity, would not satisfy *Athanasius*, who yet did not hold that each *Hypostasis* had the same *singular Essence*. They are with him, but one *G O D*, because there is but one Principle: *Because* they are undivided and inseparable: *Because* of their mutual Union and Inexistence, called by the *Greeks* *περιχώρησις* and *ἐμπεριχώρησις*, and finally, *because* the three Persons make one entire Divinity, as the Root, Stock and Branches make one entire Tree.

THIS is Dr. *Cudworth's* Account of the common Sense of the *Nicene Fathers*. This was current Divinity, according to him, for many Centuries at least in the *Greek Church*. Nor was the Doctrine of three Persons in one *singular existent Essence*, as he tells us, owned by any public Authority in the Christian Church, whatever might be the private Sentiments of particular Men till the *Lateran Council*, Anno MCCXV. And it is very plain Mr. *Howe* thought this a just and true Account. And

Dr. *Waterland*, who has been so much and so justly applauded in this Controversy, is, I think, manifestly of the same Opinion, and treads exactly in *Athanasius's* Steps, according to Dr. *Cudworth's* Account of his Sentiments. He holds three * *real Hypostases* as well as *Athanasius*, not mere *Modes*, *Attributes* or *Properties* of *G O D*, or the divine Being. *Three individual intelligent Agents*. But how can these be one *G O D*? Why, says † he, the Unity consists in, or ultimately resolves into, Unity of Principle, one ἄρχῃ. Head, Root, or Fountain of all. Or, as *Athanasius* expresses it, *μία ἀρχὴ, καὶ κατὰ τὸ το, εἰς θεός*. One Principle and, in this Respect, one *G O D*. But will this, by it self, account for the Unity? No, says he elsewhere, ‡ there must be Equality of Nature, as well as Unity of Principle. But will this do without any thing farther? There is Equality of Nature between a Father and Son among Men, but Unity of Principle will not make these two to be one *Man*. Therefore the Dr. elsewhere ** tells us, that the Sum of the Catholic Doctrine, is the same Homogeneous Substance (which in other Words is ὁμοουσιότης, *Consubstantiality*, or the Equality of Nature before-mentioned) and Inseparability. The first makes each *Hypostasis* *res divina*, the other makes all to be *una substantia, una summa res*, one undivided, or individual, or numerical Substance. Just as according to the Sentiments of *Athanasius*, before represented from Dr. *Cudworth*, one might say, that the Homogeneity of the Substance will make the Root, Stock or Branches

* Defence of Quæries, p. 350.

† Defence of Quæries, p. 185.

‡ P. 359. ** P. 391.

of a Tree *res arborca*, and the Inseparability of them will render them *una Substantia, una summa res*, one undivided, individual or numerical Tree. Which may be, and they yet have not the self same, but, several distinct Essences, though no separate Existence. It must however be farther considered, that God is a spiritual Being, and though *Athanasius*, and other Ancients, made use of these Resemblances from material things to explain the Doctrine of the Trinity, they did not think the Resemblance full, however fit they thought it to help our Conceptions. We must not apprehend the three Persons to be no more one, or in no closer Union than the Root, Stock, and Branches of a Tree. These only coexist and adhere to one another, as gross material Substance may; whereas the Persons, whole Nature must be conceived of as most spiritual, mutually inexist, act and operate. This is *περιχώρησις* and *ἐμπεριχώρησις*, And therefore the Dr. elsewhere informs us, † that Father and Son, by an ineffable Union of Substance, Presence, Will, Power, Operation, &c. (or *περιχώρησις*) may be one GOD, or as he elsewhere calls it ‡ one τὸ Θεὸν one Godhead. And this compleats his Account of the Unity, and just after the Manner of *Athanasius* in Dr. Cudworth. This according to him is the Catholic Doctrine, as well as according to Mr. Howe and Dr. Cudworth; the true Medium between *Sabellianism* and *Arianism*. I hope therefore, that, for the Time to come, you will shew your Respect to Dr. Waterland, in the same manner you have done to Mr. Howe; and that every Candidate for the Ministry shall be dismiss'd without the Favour of your Hand, who will not renounce his Sentiments.

BUT have you any better Liking to the common Notion of a Person in the Godhead? I mean the common one since *Peter Lombard* and the *Lateran Council*, and perhaps of some private Drs. since the days of *St. Austin*. This is, I think, the divine Essence or Being subsisting in a peculiar Manner, i. e. after one Manner in the Father, another in the Son, and a third in the Holy Ghost. So as that the Father is the divine Nature or Being subsisting of himself, the Son is the self same Being subsisting by Generation of the Father, and the Holy Ghost the self same being subsisting by Procession from the Father only (as the Greeks say) or from Father and Son, as say the *Latins* and the *Reformed*. The Persons are the Deity distinguished by their several Properties, and these the Properties which distinguish the Persons.

* Page 391.

† Page 323.

‡ Page 329

THIS Faith, you, with some others of your Brethren, have, I think, under your Hand disclaimed. What else means this Passage in a Piece owning you in Part for its Author? * *Though these Three are in holy Scripture spoken of under the Names of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and as begetting, begotten and proceeding, yet still we leave it to those who are wiser, or at least more bold and daring than we, to say that this does, and to shew afterwards how it does relate to the divine Essence.* This strange Passage is, I think, † yours. And all Men are here charged with Lack of Modesty, if not of Sense, with being at least much more presumptuous *than you*, who talk of a *Father and Son* properly so called in the Godhead, or of *begetting*, or *being begotten* as any way relating to the *divine Essence*. So that, whatever you mean by the *Persons in the Godhead*, and whatever Distinction you make between them, they can not in your Account be distinguished by *these Properties*.

AND, by the way, was not this a most apt and harmonious Introduction to an *Harmony of Confessions*, and likely to procure it much Regard with intelligent Readers, to call all who drew up these Confessions, and all who have since approved and subscribed them too, *bold and daring*, if not *weak and injudicious Men*; that to be sure, had more Confidence than you, though, perhaps, not as much Sense? For there is hardly one of these Confessions from the *Nicene Creed* down to that of the *Westminster Assembly*, but what expressly own the *Father* to be *unbegotten*, and the *Son* as *G O D*, to be *begotten* of the *Father*, and whose Compilers were therefore so *bold and daring*, as to maintain, that the Names of *Father*, and *Son*, and the Terms *begetting*, *begotten*, &c. do in this Matter plainly relate to the *divine Nature and Essence*.

INDEED, the *Ancients* laid such a Stress on maintaining this, that they thought the Unity of the Godhead could not otherwise be maintained. Dr. *Waterland* will tell you, as above quoted, that this consists in, or ultimately resolves into, *Unity of Principle*. And Bishop ‡ *Pearson* will tell you, that, in their Account, *to assert more than one, who was from none, were to maintain two G O D S*. * *Basil* defends himself from such a Charge by allowing, that *whoever did introduce two Principles, preached two Gods, but that he himself did not preach two Gods, as long as he did*

* Doctrine of the blessed Trinity. ‡ On Creed, p. 40. * Μὴ μοι φαίνεται, δύο κηρύσσει Θεός· ἢ δύο θεοί. ἔδδ' γὰρ δύο πατέρες. Ο μὲν ἀρχὴς ἀσάγων δύο, δύο κηρύττει Θεός. Hom. xxvi. See also Athanas. contra Sabel. Gregales. Vol. 1. Edit. Colon. p. 656.

† You have made it yours by plainly adopting it.

not assert two Fathers, or two who had Divinity from none. And * Hilary tells us to the same Purpose, that *though the Father be GOD, and the Son GOD, yet there is but one GOD, because but one unbegotten*; adding, that *to say the Son is unbegotten, † is most impious*. And the Council of *Sirmium*, of which you have an Account in the same Author, denounced an ‡ *Anathema* against such as maintained the Son to be unoriginate (*innascibilem & sine Initio*) or that there were two in the Trinity *innascibile*, or unbegotten, or *sine Principio*, for that this would make two Gods. Yet can you dare to say, they are all bold and daring Men, who affirm any of these Terms relate to the divine Nature, tho' you stand here conciliarly anathematized for your Pains?

BUT very plain it is, I think, from what has been said, that you are gone off from the *Catholick Doctrine*, as it was before the Time of *Peter Lombard*; and equally departed from the *Catholick Doctrine*, as it has been since. You hold neither a real Person in the Godhead, as ancient Catholics held; not a proper Father and Son in the Godhead, and a Spirit proceeding from one or both of them, as the Catholics of all Times have held. And though you call Father, Son, and holy Spirit three Persons in the same undivided Nature, yet I cannot see you have left Room for any other Persons but *Sabellian* or *Unitarian* ones. Nay, many of our *English Unitarians*, will go farther into the *Catholick Doctrine*, than, it seems, you dare to do. * They will own an *unbegotten* Father, and his *only begotten* Son, and an holy Spirit proceeding from both, whilst with the Schools, this be understood of *original Mind, reflex Wisdom* or *Knowledge*, and *Self-love*; or *Deus, Deus seipsum Sciens*, & *ex hac scientia seipsum Amans*.

AND is not the Matter now brought to a fine Issue? When the *Sabellians* are as orthodox, and the *English Unitarians* are more orthodox, and will go farther into the *Catholick Doctrine* than you and some others, who have been crying down your Brethern for deserting the Faith, at least for not making Clamour enough for it, and spiring up the People to enquire into the Belief of their Ministers in this Article, as what they must lay at the Foundation of all their future Hopes.

* Idcirco Deus unus est (cum Pater Deus sit, & Filius Dei, Deus sit) quia innascibilitas sola penes unum sit. *Hilar. de Synod. p. 235. Edit. Basil. 1570.* † Filium innascibilem confiteri, impiissimum est, *ibid.* ‡ Siquis innascibilem & sine initio dicat Filium, tanquam duo sine principio, & duo innascibilia, & duo innata dicens, duos faciat Deos, anathema sit, *ibid.* * See Agreement of Unitarians with the Catholic Church, p. 33. and Nye's Tract. passim.

AND have not the People a *wonderfull Security* for the *soundness* of their Minister's Faith, about the Trinity, who take you for *their Guide*, and one of *his Triers*, and sit down satisfied with his declaring *his Belief of the ever blessed Trinity* in Opposition to the *Arian Heresy*, or, *that the Son and Spirit are of the same undivided Nature with the Father*? When, this notwithstanding, he may be as great an *Heretick*, as if he believed them to be of a *different Nature*. Nay, a greater, I mean a worse, if Dr. *Waterland*, be a competent Judge. For though he thinks the **Sabellian* is a *neater Scheme*, and more consistent with itself, the *Arian*, he says, is more *pious and modest*.

BUT if after all, the *right Faith* of the Trinity is what must be laid at the Foundation of all our Hopes of Heaven, and the Faith of the *Catholicks*, whether more ancient or modern, be this *right Faith*, I do not see that you have left your self any Foundation for Hope. But after all your solemn Declamation against the new *Scheme*, you have, with the Assistance of other Hands, been forming a *new Scheme* to ruin all your Hopes. But, I hope, God has left Mr. *Reynolds*, more Grounds to expect Salvation, than he seems to have left himself, or is willing to leave any who cannot with him *believe the Son and Spirit to be of the same undivided Nature with the Father*.

FOR though you do not seem to know what you mean when you talk of *three Persons* in the Godhead, and must therefore believe and *worship you know not what* †, I verily hope you have an *orthodox Meaning* after all. You would receive and believe the Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, as delivered in the holy Scripture, and whatever you have said, you mean nothing inconsistent with it. You would neither willingly entertain, nor utter any Sentiment of this Sort. You have not quitted the *Catholick Faith* out of Will to it, and Malice propense. You are well affected to the Truth, and sincerely aim at it, though you have missed it. This, I think, is *orthodoxly meant*, and I hope therefore you may *obtain Mercy*, though you are mistaken. And methinks you may leave some Room to hope concerning others, who certainly discover their *Meaning* to be as *orthodox* as yours, by taking much Pains to search out the Truth, and suffering much Reproach, and not a little Damage, by professing and maintaining what they apprehend to be the Truth, though they may be mistaken as well as you. Your *orthodox Intention* must certainly come into the

* Def. of Quarries, p. 358.

† Which yet you elsewhere represent as a very strange and frightful thing. viz. Destr. of Trinity, p. 134.

Relief of your *unorthodox Faith*, that your Hopes may not utterly fail. And then, methinks, you should allow that the like *orthodox Meaning* may be of some service to others, and leave them some Ground of Hope, though they have gone off from the *Catholick Faith* in a Tract different from yours. If only they who believe right, have any fair Hopes, of Heaven, you have Reason to look about you. But if you may believe *wrong*, and yet hope *well*, because of your *good Intention*, why may not another, with Intentions as good as yours, mistake in this Matter; and yet have some Foundation left for Hope? When your self need to be treated with Indulgence, I think you should not treat your Fellow-Servants with Severity, and hastily doom them to Destruction. For my own Part, I am willing to leave as much Room for others to hope for Salvation as possibly I can, especially in deep and difficult Points of Theology, that I may leave some for my self. For if none must go to Heaven but those who are *right Believers*, and *certainly know* themselves to be so, in such Points, I am afraid the *narrow Way* to Heaven will be made much narrower than our blessed Lord has left it, and *very few*, indeed, *will they be that find it*.

I have been too long on these two Heads, to go far into other Particulars. But many Things more want to be cleared up, before it can be made appear, that this People have acted *agreeably to all their Rights as Men and Christians*, if they did demand all, as *Necessary* to their Satisfaction, which you tell us their worthy Minister has done. For, to say no more of the Doctrine of the Trinity, to which at all Times he must steadily adhere, it needs to be cleared up, *what Proof* of his steady Adherence to this Doctrine (be that what it will) is to be *deemed reasonable*? And *who* is to judge? When must he be thought, *to be called out in a proper Manner*, to give this reasonable Proof? Must this Call be *from Heaven, or of Men*? If from Heaven, how is it to be notified to him? May he himself be a Judge of this Call, or is he to take it for granted, that when *you*, or any *pragmatical Man* in the Congregation, who may think himself wiser than you, or his own Teacher, shall demand it of him, that *this is a Call from GOD*? If this be your Meaning, I hope he will have so much Regard to his own Peace and Comfort, as to desire, that when you come on this Errand, you would produce *your Commission* from Heaven. But if he may judge of this Call for himself, it is very possible he may think *quite otherwise*, when *you*, and *those* you can Influence, may pronounce him called of GOD to it.

You

You thought your self *under a Call from GOD*, (and tell us of many of your Brethren in the same Sentiments) to sign the Roll at *Salter's Hall*, that you might give a *publick Testimony to an Article of Christian Faith*, that might reach the Knowledge of the whole World, and be conveyed down to the latest Posterity, when he might more justly think, this was only stamping a *Dream*, and a very silly Dream, of your own, with *divine Authority*. Surely you had never a Call from *GOD*, to so vain and senseless an Undertaking. It is perfect *Quixotism*. What! your writing your Name on a Piece of Parchment at *Salter's Hall*, teach the Knowledge of the whole World! and spread wider than the Gospel! *Your Testimony to the Trinity*, be more diffused, than Christianity it self has ever yet been, or the Doctrine and Testimony of the Apostles! And not only spread so wide, but last so long, and reach down to the latest Posterity! How many much more important Synods, and their Names who composed them, and all their Transactions, have been buried in utter Oblivion (in all Probability) within half that Number of Years! But-----What a Figure does Mr. *Reynolds* make in the History of his Times at present, what a Figure will he make, in his own Conceit, to all succeeding Times! How ample and lasting a Fame has he acquired? And has he not richly deserved it, by giving his Testimony to the Doctrine of the Trinity, and so much *Reputation to the Mind of GOD*, about it! This was entring his Name on the most durable Records of Fame; especially since, as I understand, the Roll is in his *own Keeping*! Vain Man! And is the awful Name of God to give Sanction to this Vanity! Had he a *Call from GOD* to such extravagant Views and Expectations? Those who are very diffident and fearful as to their *Brethren*, I find may be very confident and presumptuous concerning *themselves*.

BT what were you under a Call of *GOD* to do? Why to *bear Testimony to the Doctrine of the Trinity*, and give all the *Reputation you could to the Mind of GOD* about it. Did this Doctrine then stand in need of your Testimony? Did it not stand firm enough upon the Basis of a divine Testimony? Was not the Mind of *GOD* sufficiently made known as to this Matter, or not of *sufficient Reputation*, without your giving it a *Passport*? Did any in the Assembly at *Salter's Hall* deny this Doctrine, or use any violent Methods to extort a Denial of it from you, or endeavour to lessen the *Reputation of the Mind of GOD* about it, to render your Testimony to it, or your Endeavours to keep up the *Reputation of the Mind of God* about it,

it, necessary? If this be insinuated, it is at once false and scandalous, and the Author of such an Insinuation, is to be charged with gross and willful *Calumny*.

BUT had this been Matter of Fact, the proper Way of *bearing Testimony* to the Doctrine, and *giving a Reputation* to the Mind of G O D about it, would have been to refute Opposers, not to write your Name on a Paper only in Token you believed. This way of bearing Testimony to the Doctrine, could not, that I see, have procured it more *Reputation* with any intelligent Person, than another Man's bearing like Testimony against it. It was no more than a Testimony that you *thought your self a right Believer*, and the Doctrine you signed (if you know what that was) to be orthodox. How far this Testification of your own Sentiments may go, in your own Conceit, in confirming the Faith of those who depend upon *your Understanding* in Matters of Faith, or in *conciliating Reputation* to the Revelations of G O D, I know not. But sure no one could think that your Testimony of *your own* Belief, could procure *Reputation* to any controverted Doctrine, or establish its Authority, who did not at the same Time believe you infallible, and that your Belief must for that Reason be the orthodox Faith, and the *undoubted Mind* of G O D about this Matter. For without this, every Man's Testimony, who has equal Capacity with you, and taken equal Pains to find out the mind of G O D, and given incontestible Proofs that he is equally honest, must be every whit as *valid a Testimony*, and give *as much Reputation*, to what he thinks the Mind of G O D, though it stands in direct Opposition to your Belief. And the Matter standing thus, you could not be *called of G O D*, to bear Testimony to this Doctrine, till you had first given incontestible Proof that you were an infallible Man, and yours therefore an infallible Testimony. For else it can stand for no more than a Declaration of your *own Belief*, which, I think, is *by it self* no Testimony to any Truth of G O D, nor therefore could you have any Call from G O D to bear such Testimony to it. But to return:

THAT you may make out that Claim of Right you have made for this People, you must moreover prove that *G O D has laid the right Belief of this Doctrine at the Foundation of every Man's future Hopes*. And for this I desire you would produce Evidence from the Word of G O D that is express and plain. For verily *you take too much upon you*, when you undertake to settle the Terms of Salvation, without express Warrant and Authority from Heaven.

HOWEVER,

HOWEVER, do not here mistake me, I do not say, that the *Article* of the *Trinity* is not at the Foundation of all our future Hopes. The Gospel Oeconomy is undoubtedly founded on it, as is all Religion on the *Being, Nature, and Perfections* of GOD, and his *Relations* to his Creatures.

WHAT I think you should prove is, that a *right Belief*, or, which in my Account is all one, *right Apprehensions* concerning this Doctrine, *must be laid as the Foundation of every Man's future Hopes*; or in other Words, *that no Man can have any Foundation for Hope, that has Misapprehensions, or a wrong Belief in any Particular about this Article.* Or if this be too much, I desire you would give a very distinct Account from Scripture, *what Misapprehensions may consist with these Hopes, and what cannot, and support all with Evidence clear and incontestible*; for this may surely be insisted upon, when *all a Man's future Hopes* are depending. And I desire you would afterward go on to prove, that no Man can have any Foundation for future Hope, who has any Misapprehension concerning the divine Nature and Perfections, or at least that you would very plainly, and certainly, distinguish the Misapprehensions that *may*, from those which *cannot* consist with these Hopes. For the *Doctrine of the Trinity* cannot be more at the *Foundation of Christianity*, than that of the divine Nature and Perfections is at the Foundation of *all Religion*. And yet I am sure, that a little Wit, with a good Mixture of Spite and Pride, may construe a Mistake about the Nature and Perfections of GOD, into *Heresy, Blasphemy, Idolatry, Atheism*, and what not; as it is but too common in the present Controversy, and almost *all others* about Religion.

AND till you have settled this Matter, I desire you would not justify Congregations *in a Lump*, in their Demand that a Minister should lay *right* (or what *they esteem right*) *Apprehensions* concerning the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, as the *Foundation of all his future Hopes*. For if all Misapprehension about it takes away all Foundation of Hope, I am afraid the Christian World will have but little Foundation for Hope left. And how you will, from the Word of GOD, be able certainly to distinguish, *those Misapprehensions* that will inevitably destroy our Hopes, from those that may still leave us some Foundation, I do not at present clearly see. However, it is a thing deserves your close and serious Consideration, and you would much oblige the *Church* and the *World* with the Result. Do not pronounce at a venture, but let us particularly know what *Mistakes*, concerning the *Trinity*, will destroy all the Foundations of our Hopes, and what *may* leave us some. And let it plainly

ly appear from the Word of God, that you are not uttering your own *Mind* but *his*, and then give it all the Reputation you can.

BUT above all, I desire you would make it appear, that it is not enough, for the necessary Satisfaction of a People as to the Soundness of their Minister's Faith, that he preach and defend the Truth, without *subscribing* it. Prove it to be an Ordinance of God, that a Minister should not only in the best Manner he can, preach and defend the Doctrine of the Trinity, but moreover, set his Hand to *your Roll* : * And that a People have a Right to demand, that he *renew* his Subscription, as often as *they* think it reasonable, or are put upon it to satisfy or humour the Jealousies of *others*. Otherwise you will never persuade the World, however confident your self may be, that this People have acted agreeably to all their Rights as Men and Christians, if they did indeed demand, all that you say, their present Minister has done, and promised to do, for their Satisfaction.

IF this, I say, be Matter of Fact. For I hope you have in this Relation neither misrepresented *him* nor *them*, and that all your *seeming Commendations* will not prove at last *real* and *gross Calumnies*. It is out of all doubt, I suppose, that this People in a Body (for 'tis to the *Body*, not any particular Persons, you are paying your Compliment in this *Preface*) did demand what you say their Minister has done, as necessary to their Satisfaction : And *he*, no doubt, has done all that *they* demanded. The Body of that People were not satisfied with his Declarations from the Pulpit, in Terms as *plain, strong* and *unexceptionable* as could be desired, till he had given the necessary Satisfaction under his Hand. *They* required he should sign *your Roll* : † and with this Demand *he* readily complied, and moreover promised, that he would be ready at all Times, to give reasonable Proof, of his steady Adherence to the Doctrine thus

* At least, to somewhat of equal Validity. † Indeed, this is not said in so many Words, as I had before observed, p. 8. Nor can any, who will compare both Passages, take me in this Sense here. But a Man, in common Speech, may be said to say, what he does not expressly assert, if his Words are apt, and seem designed, to convey such a Meaning. The Generality of your Readers, who knew no more of the Matter than you have thought fit to communicate, did thus apprehend you, indeed all with whom I have conversed. And thought thereupon (till better inform'd) that Mr. Denham did sign, or at least, express himself willing to sign, and that once and again, your Roll. And by your Way of Expression, you seem to me, not at all unwilling, this last Sentiment at least, should pass on the World, if your Words can fairly bear any other Interpretation.

subscribed to, and that as *the only Foundation* on which he builds *all his future Hopes*, and this *not only* by preaching and defending it, but *by subscribing* again to it, when he shall be called in a *proper Manner*. This is all naked Fact, without the least Colouring or Art. Neither the People nor their Minister are at all misrepresented. Mr. *Reynolds*, tho' so *jealous of others*, has yet acted so plain, and open, and honest a Part in all Instances, and with all Persons, since the *Change* of the *Question* at *Salter's-Hall*, down to the *Ejection* of his Assistant, and his last *Funeral Performances*, that none who knows the Man, can righteously suspect him, of varying a Title from the Truth in this Narration.

BUT though we must not question your Veracity in this Relation, I hope we may expostulate with you, for the kind Censures on your Brethren, tacked to it.

How happy had it been (say you) if all in the Ministry had been as frank and open, as ready and free to own their Principles, in the same Manner as my Brother has expressed himself willing to do. Let me here ask you, have you no *Jealousies* and *Suspensions* that some in the Ministry, are not *thoroughly in the Doctrine* with you? If not, why all this Clamour? Whence this violent Displeasure against them; Why must they who are *unsuspected*, purge themselves? If yea, you have either *just Grounds* for your Suspensions, or not. If not, you injure them by the Suspicion, and you ought to repent of the Wrong, and ask *Pardon* for it, both of *GOD* and *Them*, instead of bringing them to the Test, to cure your, not *godly Jealousies*, but, *evil Surmisings*. But if you have *just Grounds*, then what is the Sense of this Paragraph? How happy a Thing would it be, if all in the Ministry, Heretics and others, would be frank and open, ready and free to own *their* Principles, lay them at the Bottom of *their* Hopes, give reasonable Proof of *their* steady Adherence to them at all Times, and this by preaching them up, by defending them, and subscribing to them! How happy a Thing would it be for every *Heretic* in the Ministry, or such as Mr. *Reynolds* justly suspects for such, to stand bound by such Engagements! Oh the Good that would be done by it!

OR are we to understand you thus, How happy had it been if all in the Ministry had openly owned *the same Principles* your Brother has done, and in the same Manner, whether they believed them or not? How happy a Thing it would be to make Men *Hypocrites*, that they may not be cried down for *Heretics*!

OR, would you by all in the Ministry be understood of all that are orthodox *only*? How happy were it if they would

would be frank and open in owning their Principles in the same Manner your Brother has expressed himself willing to do! Ministers, I think, might be frank and open in owning their Principles in this Manner, according to your Account of it, and yet be close and covered *Heretics* all the while, though, perhaps, not *Arian* ones. I know none among your nonsubscribing Brethren, but, when they have thought themselves called to it in a proper Manner, have been full as open and frank as you, in declaring their Principles, and given as reasonable Proofs of the Soundness of their Faith, though they do not think fit to sign your Roll, and though they think no Doctrines of mere Revelation are to be made fundamental to Salvation, or even brotherly Communion that cannot be expressed in the Words of the Revelation it self, nor all that can, unless this Stress be manifestly laid upon them in the Scriptures. May we not appeal to our Hearers, nay, to the Consciences of our Brethren? May not several of us appeal to the World for the Truth of this? But preaching the Doctrine, defending it, nay, publishing our Belief to the World, is not being frank and open enough, unless we'll set our Names to an *human Form*, as an Evidence of our Soundness in the *Christian Faith*.

NAY, we must now lay the Foundation of all our future Hope on the Faith thus expressed. This, I think, is carrying the Matter beyond the Subscription at *Salter's-Hall*. Indeed, I had no Inclination to sign the Roll then, nor had I ever the Honour to see it since (though I had an Offer made me, by one pretty deep in the Affair, that it should be destroyed, if I would hinder the Advices being sent to *Exeter*;) but I never did hear it was prefaced with *Quicumque vult*. But, how happy would it be, if every Minister would come to you, and set his Hand to it with this new Preface! How wonderful a Thing is this subscribing! How potent a Charm is there in it! Though it be done in an *Heat*, in a *Corner*, in Breach of all *Synedical Order*, and contrary to a *Vote of Assembly*, it will yet spread a Man's Fame through the whole World. It will convey his Name, with Honour, to the very Tip of the Tail of Time. It will confute *Heresies*; and confound *Heretics*. It will preserve the Faith, better than preaching and defending it. In short, it is *Minerva's Shield*, with the *Gorgon's Head* in it. It will turn every *Heretic* to Stone, that will but look at it. If Ministers would but subscribe, *actum est de Arianis*. Farewell *Arianism*. What a Fondness have Men for their own Inventions! Oh! how happy had it been, if the God of all Wisdom had but consulted some of his *Creatures*, when he settled the Charter of the Church, and gave out his Revelations!

relations! How much better had the Faith been preserved! And how surprizing is it, that this goodly Method of *subscribing* the *Doctrines* of Christianity in a *Form of Words* of Men's devising, should never come into the Mind of GOD, or if it did, that he should never say one Word of it, from one End of the Bible to the other!

BUT how happy had it been, indeed, for the Church and World, if this *Method of subscribing*, had never come into the Mind of Men, more than into the Mind of GOD! If, as that holy Man, Mr. *Baxter* *, expresses it, the Devil had never put on his Gown, stepped into the infallible Chair, and in a Fit of reverend Zeal, taken upon him to preserve and perfect the Faith of the Church! This was opening *Pandora's Box*. Had not Satan turned Orthodox, and tempted Christian Ministers to make, and mend, and enlarge Creeds, and prevent and cure Heresy by Subscription to their own Terms and Forms, Peace and Truth had been much better preserved than they have been, or ever will be, till this *Engine of the Devil*, as that good and wise Man calls it, be overthrown.

Y o u go on, *And would it not be an effectual Means to stop the growing Mischief we all bewail, if something of the like Nature (with Subscription you mean) or of equal Validity, might be agreed on? I could fall upon my Knees, and beseech it in the Bowels of Christ.* Very pathetic it must be owned, and shews great Concern to carry a Point. But you know, there are Thousands in the World would answer, that this is no Mean to stop any Mischief that we all bewail; but a direct Mean to promote as great a Mischief as any we can bewail. It will neither prevent the Mischief of *Jealousy*, *Heresy*, or *Discord* amongst Brethren. It is not a Mean in its own Nature fit, nor instituted by GOD, nor effectual when tried. And it is the most direct Mean in the World, to introduce *Tyranny* into the Church, and settle it in it. And the Reasons for this have been so often mentioned, and so little Reason advanced against it, that asking this Question in the most moving Manner, is not likely to

* Directions about Peace of Conscience, *Direct.* xxvi. I would beg Leave to recommend the whole Passage to your serious Consideration, because you will there find we are not the first among the *Nonconformists*, who have laid imposed Subscriptions to Forms and Terms of Men's devising at the Foundation of Popery, or thought them an Impeachment of the Perfection and Sufficiency of Scripture, and therein a Reproach to Christ, his Spirit and Apostles, yea, and the Christian Faith: As implying that his Word will not afford a Creed a System of Fundamentals, or Points absolutely necessary to Salvation, and brotherly Communion, in fit or tolerable Phrases, but the Language, at least, must be mended.

do much in this Controversy, with those that understand it.

You would *beseech us in the Bowels of Christ*, to do what? Any thing that Christ has appointed, and required to be done? Shew us *his Authority* for it, and I hope you shall find us ready to comply, and save you the Trouble of all such *lowly and pathetick Intreaties*. If it be somewhat for which you have no Authority from Christ, we beseech you in *our Turn*, that we may be left to judge *whether* it be fit to be done at all, and *when* (if it be found so) we are to do it. If you will not leave us this Liberty, you must give me Leave to say, this Fit of Lowliness is only *Craft* in a *recommending Disguise*. The mere Humility of the *Servus Servorum Dei*. You will fall down on your Knees, and beseech us to say after you, and do what you bid us, and leave you to be Judge and Director *what* we are to do, and *when* we must do it. This, I apprehend, is a little too assuming for so very humble a Man. And, to beseech us to do this *in the Bowels of Christ*, is, I think, making too bold with that *glorious Name*, though you may mistake it for an *Overflow* of Zeal for the Honour of our Lord.

You tell us of *many Thoughts*, which, according to the *best of your poor Capacity*, you have had concerning this Matter, and are pleased to give us the Result of them. This I desire you would re-examine. Perhaps you may have Occasion to see Things in another Light, when you consider what Thoughts other People have of them.

You cannot see, you say, *any Objection sufficient to excuse those, who are thoroughly in the Doctrine* with you. (For not signing with you, I suppose, you mean:) But who are these? Are you thoroughly in the Doctrine with *your self*? Or all that signed *your Roll*, are they *thoroughly* in the Doctrine *with you*? I hope not, for the Credit of Dissenters. I should be loth to have it appear, that the *Majority of their Pastors in this City* (which you have boasted your selves to be) have gone off from the *Catholick Faith* in this great Article, and disown, as well as you, the *Generation* of the second, and *Procession* of the third Person in the Trinity. What would have been branded as *Heresy*, in every Church and Age, and by every Council from the earliest Times, to the present, I hope is not the Faith of all that signed *your Roll*. But if you differ from one another, how shall it be known who is *thoroughly* in the Doctrine *with you*? Setting your Hands to the same Words, will not prove, it seems, that you are *thoroughly in the Doctrine* with one another. And I hope you will find none of those whom you deem inexcusable for not signing with you, are *so thoroughly* departed from the Doctrine of the *Catholic Church*,

as you are. They do not think that in Revenge to the *Arians* this is to be renounced. And as the Case stands, you have much more need of an *Excuse*, for setting up your self as a *Standard*, and requiring Men to subscribe, who are *thoroughly in the Doctrine* with you, than your Brethren have for refusing to set their Hands to *your Roll*.

BUT let it be supposed, you were thoroughly in the *Doctrine of the Catholic Church*; was it not worth while to have considered whether they who are as catholic as you, but did not think fit to sign *your Roll*, had any *Occasion* for an *Excuse*, before you took upon you to examine whether any had been made for them that was sufficient? You know very well, they thought themselves under no *Obligation* to subscribe, and therefore wanted no *Excuse* for *not doing it*. In a free Action it was sufficient for *them* that they thought it inconvenient, and this should have been sufficient for *you*. They humbly hope, they are under no *Obligation* immediately to follow you, in all your Sentiments and Practices. They have some Liberty of their own, and do not want a *formal Excuse* for every Action, wherein they venture to differ from you. Had you *competent Authority* to require *their Subscription*, you might look for an *Excuse* for their not complying with it: But as Matters now stand, between Equals, your *nonsubscribing Brethren* had as much Reason, at least, to expect an *Excuse from you*, for *your Action*, as you had, to expect *from them* an *Excuse for theirs*.

THIS is true, they thought fit to give you and the World, *some Reasons* why they did not subscribe. But I beseech you, Sir, let them stand for *Reasons*, not *Excuses*, for which they had no *Occasion*. But had they indeed wanted one, you have, in my Opinion, taken Care to provide them a sufficient one,

FOR my own Part, say you, *I can never think I desert any just Principles of Separation from the established Church, or of the old Nonconformists, by my voluntary signing with my Hand, what I firmly believe in my Heart; but rather, that I bring a Reproach on my Separation, if I refuse that which I can do without Sin; for thereby I think I should give a just Occasion to others, to impute my Refusal to Humour and not to Conscience*. Sir, permit me to put you in Mind, besides that you have wholly mistaken the Case, that this is an Air of writing very improper for this Subject. You might have imputed their Refusal to *Humour*, perhaps, and not to *Conscience*, when they refused what they *could do without Sin*, had you been their *Diocesan*, and required their Subscription in Virtue of their *Canonical Obedience*.

This

This Air might become a *Bishop* of the Church, as by Law established, or a Champion for its *Canons* and *Constitutions*: But it is somewhat too assuming in a private Minister, without the Pales of a legal Establishment, and to whom his Brethren owe no Canonical Obedience that I know of (I speak under Correction, however, if I am mistaken) and who have an *equal Right* to impute your subscribing in Opposition to them, to *Humour*, and not to *Conscience*, seeing you might have let it alone without Sin. And what Foundation is there for this assuming Air? Were your Brethren obliged to consider or regard, what *private Men* were doing, when they withdrew disorderly from them, as if it had the *Authority* of a legal Convocation, or the *Force* of an Act of Parliament? To take so much upon you, and claim so much Authority over your Brethren, I am sure is to desert the *just Principles* of the old *Nonconformists*, and as I verily hope of the *modern ones* too.

I can never think, say you, that I desert, &c. by what? My voluntary signing with my Hand what I believe in my Heart. Is not this a manifest Change of the Question between you and your Brethren, put upon the World for the State of it? Who would not think that by *voluntary* here, must be understood a signing according to Judgment, and out of free Choice? But is this the Case of any of your *Non-subscribing* Brethren? Could their signing be *thus* voluntary, when in their Judgment it was a rash and ill-advised Action, and like to be attended with no Advantage, but many mischievous Effects? You may call it *voluntary* as long as you please, but it was not so *in it self*, nor could be so to them, when their Judgment must be over-ruled, when if they did not conform to you, they must fall under your heavy Displeasure, and all the Pains and Penalties attending it. They thought it an Imposition *then*, and as Matters have since been managed, they are fully convinced of it *now*. And so you have helped them to an *Excuse*, which *yourself* must allow. For to submit to an Imposition, without sufficient Reason, or any *shew* of Authority, is what they cannot do without Sin.

I cannot but take Notice here, that it is by thus changing the Question, that you commonly endeavour to excuse yourselves. Perhaps, more from *Mistake* than *Design*, at least, I would hope so. But pray, Sir, who ever set a voluntary signing with your Hand what you believe in your Heart, against any *Principles* of Separation from the Establishment, or of the *Nonconformists*, whether old or young? But a voluntary Subscription is one thing, and an imposed Subscription is another. And one may contradict the *just Prin-*

Principles, &c. when the other does not. For my own Part, I always took it, that Subscriptions of all Kinds, whether to *Liturgies* or *Articles*, had been a Grievance to *our Fathers*, as well as to *us*. Tho' rather than be rendered utterly incapable of publick Usefulness, they and we have submitted to the Hardship, and subscribed to some of the xxxix Articles; and *that* which you subscribed among the rest; and *some* which *you* and *others* of your Brethren, can hardly subscribe again, without a Change in your *present Principles*. But that Subscriptions of this Sort, have been deemed Hardships, by *our Fathers*, as well as by *us*, should, I think, need no Proof. I shall only put you in Remembrance, that Mr. *Baxter*, when he came to subscribe in 1689, gave in an Explication of the Articles, in which many of his Brethren concurred, which was prefaced with a * *Wish that GOD's own Word might be taken for the sufficient Terms of our Consent and Concord, in order to Union and Communion*. I know not whether you'll admit this for a Principle of the *old Nonconformists*, or whether you will think it a *just one*, or whether if it be admitted for just, you'll think you have deserted it or no, I do not say, by your *voluntary* Subscription, for that is no Debate *between us*, but, by *insisting* on a Subscription by *others*, who cannot be *voluntary*, that is, can never be free to it, or do it with good Liking. This I take to have been the Case of *Nonconformists* in all Times. *The Imposition* they disliked, and protested against, even when they could lawfully have complied with the *Thing enjoyned*, and have done so in some Instances rather than be wholly useless.

AND *Imposition*, doubtless, you are ready to *disclaim*, and, in your own Case, I am apt to think would be as ready to *complain* of it. Far be it from you to *impose* a Subscription to any *human Terms or Forms* whatever, as a Condition of being admitted to the Ministry in general, or the Charge of a particular Congregation. This might be a Desertion of the *Principles of Nonconformity*. But *you can never think you desert them by voluntary signing*. True. Your own *voluntary* Signing, [*whether your own or other Men's Words*,] is a Thing wherein you are at *Liberty*. You may do it if you please. But what if I voluntarily forbear? Am I at my *Liberty* too? If so, there is no Harm done. But will you take no Measures to make me do it *voluntarily*, whether I *will or no*? The *Principles of Nonconformity* might possibly be deserted, should you make me subscribe *involuntarily*. But when Mr. *Denham* is made

* Dr. Calamy's Abridgment, Vol. 1. p. 469.

to do it *voluntarily*, that he may be admitted Pastor to a Congregation, and Mr. *Read* or others are ejected or [re-jected, or have their Maintenance in whole or in Part withheld] for being *involuntary*, or not willing to subscribe *, all the Principles of *Nonconformity* are safe.

WHEN you add *that it would cast a Reproach on your Separation, if you did refuse what you can do without Sin, &c.* I doubt you cast Reproach on your self and the *whole Body* of Nonconformists, and make them appear as acted more by *Humour* than by *Conscience*. Whether this be your *own Case*, is your *own Concern*; but I am very loth such an Imputation should lie on the *whole Body*. Give me Leave here to ask you, Do you verily believe all that is required by the Establishment, which yet you *refuse to do*, is utterly unlawful to be done, or cannot be done *without Sin*? I think you refuse to use *their Liturgy*, or any Part of it, in your publick Ministrations; but do you believe that it can be used, neither in *Whole*, nor in *Part* without Sin? This may possibly be *your Sense*; but I am fully assured many of the *ancient Nonconformists* would have thought the use of much of it lawful. Nay, many of them did use it in *Part*, before it was enjoined by *Law*, I mean in the Interval between the *Restoration* and *Bartholomew Act*, who after its Imposition used no Part of it in their public Ministrations. This is Demonstration to me, that what you lay down as the *only just Principle* of Separation, was no Principle of these *old Nonconformists* at all. They thought a Spirit of Imposition was to be opposed, though many of the Things enjoined might *be done without Sin*. They declared against *imposed Subscriptions*; whatever they contained, as infringing Christian Liberty.

THIS the *Nonsubscribers* take to be their own Case, and you must not only state, but prove it to be; otherwise, before they can alter their Judgment concerning it. Indeed, for our Conviction you add, *I judge my subscribing to be no Infringement of Christian Liberty, whilst no compulsive Methods are used, to oblige me to do what I take to be sinful, or to subscribe to what I do not believe.* But I hope you judge thus of the Nature of *Christian Liberty* for your self only, and will permit others to judge of it as well as you. Now, Sir, there are many that judge, and, as I think, with *very good Reason*, that it is an Infringement of *Christian Liberty*, to use *compulsive Methods*, to oblige Men to do even what they take *not to be sinful*, or to subscribe *all* that they believe: For as much as this is *confining* where

* Or answer to Satisfaction de inquirendis, which, in my Account, is much the same:

God has left at *Liberty*, and making *necessary* what he has left *indifferent*. This I am sure was the Opinion of all those great Men among the *Nonconformists*, who opposed the Imposition of *Kneeling at the Sacrament*, who yet in Practice declared, they did not think it *sinful* to receive in that Posture. And I profess I should have been startled to hear Christian Liberty thus stated, by any calling himself a Dissenter, who has ever considered the Case of *indifferent Things*, as argued between the Churchmen and his Brethren; but that I have lived long enough to be convinced, that Men may write against Impositions, with an *imposing Spirit*, and cry down Impositions *on themselves* as an Infringement of Christian Liberty, whilst they can impose *upon others*, and bear them down all the while, that they make no Breach upon Christian Liberties. In short, *all Men* I find are very much set on justifying themselves. And most Men rather than own a *Blunder* in Practice, will fly in the Face of their *Principles*: Or else they have *one Set* of Principles to defend themselves against the Encroachments of *others*, and a quite *contrary Set* to justify their Encroachments *on others*.

You cannot see that your subscribing is any *Infringement*, &c. Your subscribing what you believe considered as a free Act, and stript of all Circumstances, is no manner of Debate between *you* and *us*. You may preach a Sermon on any Truth of the Gospel, and state any Doctrine of it, and publish it when you have done, with your Name to it. This is only using your *own Liberty*, without Infringement of any Man's. The Subscription in Debate between us, is either a *voluntary subscribing* to a Form of Words of Men's devising, without any Warrant from God, for *detecting*, and *disgracing*, and *rendring useles*, and perhaps *ruining* and *destroying* those who cannot pronounce *Shibboleth*: Or else, a Subscription *imposed upon us*, without any just Reason, and against our Judgment and Inclination. By the *former* we think we should break in upon the *Christian Liberty* of *others*: By the *latter* we should suffer Infraction of *our own*. Whereas by a voluntary Subscription in the former Sense neither would be done.

You, it seems, are of Opinion that it is no Breach upon your Christian Liberty to *oblige you to sign what you do believe*, though it might, to force you to sign what you do not believe.

But here let me ask a Question, either it is known, before your *compulsive Methods* are used, that I believe what I am to sign, or it is not? If it be, for what End am I forced to sign? If it be not, forcing me to sign must according

According to you, infringe upon my Christian Liberty. For, according to you, this would be done by compelling a Man to sign what he believes not. And when what he believes is unknown, the using Force to make him subscribe, is certainly using it where it may be injuriously applied, and where the Persons who use it, know not but it is injuriously applied, even according to you. This cannot but be *breaking in* upon Christian Liberty. He can have no very tender Regard for Christian Liberty, who *right* or *wrong* will use *compulsive Methods* to make Men subscribe.

BUT suppose it fully known that I believe what you would *compel* me to subscribe, only let it be supposed at the same Time, that I am persuaded in my self, that this subscribing *Forms of Men's devising as a Testimony* that I believe the *Truths of GOD*, and as a Mark of Discrimination between *Orthodox* and *Heretics*, is an Invention of Men without the least Shadow of a divine Institution for it, and therefore in it self an Infringment of Christian Liberty: That it is, in Mr. *Baxter's* Phrase, an Engine of Satan to defame the Scriptures, to reproach Christ and his Spirit, and the Christian Faith, and to destroy Truth and Peace: Not only utterly unexpedient but infinitely mischievous, and the very Basis and Support of Popery. May *compulsive Methods* be used to make me, with such a Set of Thoughts, sign such a Form, because I believe it, without any Infringement of my Christian Liberty? I trow not.

HOWEVER, *compulsive Methods*, I perceive, may be used with those who will not do what you bid them, provided they are of your Side the Question: They may be forced to sign what they do believe. How so? Is not this a Matter of Liberty, a *Thing indifferent* which they may do or let alone? This is acknowledged expressly in the next Sentence. And is it no Infringment of Christian Liberty to compel me to do what, *you own*, I may let alone, and I think I were much better let alone? It seems not.

AND this I suppose must stand for a Justification of all the *compulsive Methods* you and others have used to oblige your Brethren to subscribe to *what they believe*. Thanks be to GOD, it was not in your Power to shut our Mouths, nor to get the Doors of our own Places of Worship shut against Us: But you have endeavoured heartily, that the good People, who attend your Ministry, should stop their Ears, and rouse their Resentments, and open their Mouths against us. Several of you are entred into an *unchristian Combination* to disown, expose and shun us: And have often made it your Business, upon the most solemn Occasions, instead of humbling your selves for your

own Sins, to defame and reproach your Brethren, and enflame and exasperate the People against them, who, in the Simplicity of their Hearts, take all for Gospel that you good Men say to them : Nay, to tell *Tales* to God Almighty against us, and make the bitterest Complaints to him, as if you thought him *such an one as your selves*, and hoped to raise his Resentments against your Brethren, to as high a Pitch as you have raised your own. The God of all Goodness and Wisdom, be sure must be angry or pleased just as you are. Who after this can doubt, whether you would use *other* Methods of Compulsion, were they in your Power, and clap us into Prison as well as cast us out of the Synagogue? For since it is *no Infringment* of Christian Liberty to force Men to subscribe *what they believe*, it can be none to continue the Force, or to lay no more, till they do subscribe. Is not this goodly pleading for Nonconformity?

YES surely, for you would not have Men forced to sign what they *do not* believe, but what they *do*: So that here is Room for Dissenters to escape Persecution still. But would you not have them forced to *stand a Tryal*, whether they believe, what you would force Believers to sign? And would you not have *Believers* compell'd to sign, that *Heretics* may be marked, *Nigro Carbone notati*? Yet God forbid you should be a *Creed* or a *Test-maker*, or do any thing grievous and hurtful to Heretics, *besides* branding *them*. Nor need you do much more. Fix the Brand on a Man, and his Business is done. He must be immediately excluded the Society of Christians. He is to be deemed and treated as a *Publican*, and yet *grudged* the being one. He must not only be deprived of all *present* Subsistence, but barred all ways to it *for the future*. And all shall be traduced at least as *Favourers* of *Heresy*, who would help him into a Station to get his Bread. The People need not be halloo'd when the Man is stigmatized. Whence it is, I know not, but *Heresy* and *Schism* have, in all Times, been much more the Objects of popular Hatred, than the most flagrant Instances of Impiety and Immorality. The People will hate and burn an *Heretic*, when they will hug and caress a common *Incendiary* or a *Murderer*. It is an Observation of Dr. * *Geddes*, that the People in *Portugal* would see an *Heretic* burned with an Air of the greatest Satisfaction and Triumph, when the most infamous Criminal could not go to Execution, but the same Persons would shew evident Marks of Tender-

* Miscellaneous Tracts, Vol. 1. p. 450.

ness and Compassion. And surely this is not a Temper of Mind peculiarly of the Growth of *Portugal* and *Papish Countries*, though it grows most rank under the Influence of the Inquisition. And upon mentioning the Inquisition, I cannot forbear saying, that the *laying a Trap* to catch *Heretics* with a Protestation against Persecution, is the goodly Method of that Office closed up with an Obtestation *in the Bowels of Christ* to the secular Powers, when the Heretic is delivered up into their Hands to be burnt, *not to touch an Hair of his Head*.

BUT you go on, *if I have Reason to judge those as weak Persons, who insist on it* (meaning Subscription) *I may pity them, but, rather than disturb or grieve them, I should think it honourable in me, to condescend in Things indifferent to their Weakness, according to the Example of the Apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 22. To the Weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the Weak.* Now it seems Subscription is among the indifferent Things. Why then so great a Stress laid on it? Why so much ado about it? Do you find your self *the more inclined* to do a Thing, the less needful it is? But perhaps we do not reckon the Subscription under Debate, such an indifferent Thing as you here represent it. We are very sure, it is no Institution of GOD. We cannot see it to be needful or useful to preserve the Faith of the Gospel at any Time, and many Times it has been made use of to destroy it. We do not see any great Good it ever did or can do, but we apprehend it apt to do Mischief, and that much has been done by it, in all Ages. And we can't place such a Thing in the Class of *mere Indifferents*, though we may *sometimes* think our selves *so circumstanced*, as that we may *lawfully* subscribe.

BUT let it be *as indifferent* as you would here have it, I am surprized to hear you talk of it in this Manner, and seriously mentioning the *Example* of the *Apostle* on this Argument. For in good Earnest when to the Weak St. Paul became as weak, that he might gain the Weak, doth it mean, that in all Matters of *Prudence*, he gave up his Judgment to the weak and imprudent? Or that in all Matters of *Liberty*, he gave up his Liberty to those who were so weak as to require it? When any were so weak as to make *necessary* what God had left *indifferent*, did this Apostle always comply with them? Was this *his Way* of condescending to the Weakness of others? Was it on this Principle he exhorted the *Galatians* to * *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*, and by no Means comply with their Weakness, *who would entangle them with a Yoke of Bondage*? Was it on this Principle that

he* withstood Peter to the Face at Antioch, because he was so complaisant to the Weakness and Passions of those of the Circumcision, and complied so sinfully with their Impositions? Peter might have argued in your Way, *I have Reason to judge these Judaizers are weak Persons, I pity them, but rather than disturb or grieve them, I think it honourable in me to condescend to their Weakness.* But Paul calls this † *Disimulation*, and not walking uprightly. Behold, Sir, what your honourable Condescension is come to. Lo! here the Apostle to whom you appeal, who would voluntarily become all Things to all Men, and who himself ‡ circumcised Timothy because of the Jews, yet boldly withstanding others for what you recommend, and calling that *Disimulation*, and not walking uprightly, which you call honourable Condescension, yea, and condemning it, for the very Reason for which you recommend it, viz. because the Imposers insisted on it, and would have made necessary what GOD had never bound upon them.

INDEED St. Paul was the great Patron and Example of Christian Liberty. Whatever he might do upon Occasion in Point of Prudence, he never would suffer himself to be imposed upon, nor the Christian Church; but steadily and courageously opposed every Man, who would make necessary what Christ and his Religion never made so, whether it were done out of *Weakness* or *Presumption*, in the Simplicity of a well-meaning Mind, or from the Pride and Confidence of such as love to have *Pre-eminence*. This Apostle's Condescension lay in not interposing with Authority in Matters indifferent, but leaving ** every Man to be fully persuaded in his own Mind. Your Condescension says, that if one Party insist upon their Demands in indifferent Things, the other must comply rather than disturb or grieve them. At this Rate, it is but for one Party to insist stiffly on a Thing, and the other becomes immediately obliged, by the Rules of your Condescension, to comply. This is the common Notion of Condescension, into which they run, who have the *Whip-hand* of their Neighbours. But the Apostle, to whom you appeal, had a quite different Notion.

HE advises that no Man †† should judge his Brother, but judge this rather, that no Man put a *Stumbling-block*, or occasion to fall in his Brother's Way. How different is this Casuistry from yours, That if weak Persons insist upon it, viz. what I think a *Stumbling-block*, or occasion to fall, I must think it honourable to condescend?

* Gal. v. 1. † Gal. ii. 11. ‡ Ver. 13, 14. ** Acts xvi. 3. †† Rom. xiv. 5. * Ver. 13.

No, Sir, neither to *the Weak* nor the *Strong*, will this Argument prevail with us to give away our Liberty, till (1. *First*,) You have proved that *your Advice* upon the Case of Things indifferent, is to be preferred to the Apostle's, *Rom. xiv.* and elsewhere; nor (2. *Secondly*,) 'Till we see you practise your self, according to your Principle. And that *though you have Reason to judge those weak Persons, who insist on having no human Ties put on them, yet rather than disturb or grieve them, you will think it honourable to condescend to their Weakness in such an indifferent Thing, and forbear.* Surely this way of talking is as pertinent on *our Side* as on *yours*. Perhaps more; for I am afraid you who are so manifestly *disturbed and grieved*, at our using our Christian Liberty, would be much more so at our accounting you *weak Persons*, and upon that Foot condescending to do as you would have us. Though I know too, Persons will over-look some Indignities, and suppress some Resentments, for a Season at least, to *carry a Point*, and serve their own Purposes.

BUT if there be any Weight in this prudential Practice of *St. Paul*, in my Apprehension it lies full against *Some* of the Subscribers. Had they prevailed by the *Threats and Fears* of their Displeasure, they might have brought some, against their Judgment and Inclination, to subscribe with them. This had been laying a *Stumbling-block* in their Way. And if you have Reason to judge them *weak Persons* for their *Refusal*, should you not also think it *honourable* to condescend to their *Weakness* in *Things indifferent*, as voluntarily subscribing certainly is, and the debated Subscription is by you admitted to be? Should you not pity them, rather than *disturb or grieve* them? And not by prompting them to act against Judgment, *become an Occasion that any weak Brother perish for whom Christ died?* Such was the Apostle's Advice, and such would his Practice have been, had he lived in our Times.

BUT you add, *And I find my self still more inclined to do it when I consider, that GOD himself, tho' he knows the Immutability of his Will, and the Unchangeableness of his Promise; yet in infinite Pity, and of mere Condescension to our Weakness, has confirmed it (his Promise, I suppose, you mean) with an Oath, and done much more than was necessary, on purpose to cure us of those Fears, Jealousies and Suspicions we are naturally prone to, and which are infinitely more unreasonable against him, than any we can entertain of our Fellow-Creatures.* There is somewhat, surely, very pertinent and strong to your Purpose in this Passage, or you would never have brought it *so often* into the

the *Pulpit*, and now uttered it again with so solemn an Air from the *Press*. But he must have a very strong and piercing Eye, who can discover wherein its *great Strength* lies. Let you and I lay our Heads together, and see what we can make out of it.

WHAT is it you find your self the more inclined to do, from this Instance of divine Condescension? Why to subscribe out of Condescension to the Weakness of your Brethren, who, it seems, are jealous-headed, and under pretext of *Fears* and *Suspensions*, would bind that upon you as necessary, in which your Lord has left you free. And so, you would give up your *Christian Liberty* in Complement to your weak Brethren; and call this honourable Condescension, and prove it such by this Instance of divine Condescension. I confess this is great and wonderful Complaisance to weak Brethren. A Behaviour exceeding courteous. And yet upon closer Inspection, I cannot like the Looks of it. This courteous Bent of Mind, as far as I can see, is all one way. You would subscribe in Condescension to weak Brethren! But would you forbear to subscribe, or insist on others subscribing, out of Condescension to weak Brethren? Not a word of that. And whence is it? Are you so very humble as to believe all the weak Brethren, or at least, all the fearful, jealous and suspicious ones are on your Side? We Nonsubscribers, perhaps, are not naturally so prone to Jealousies, &c. or you have not given so much Occasion for them? Or is it no Matter whether our Jealousies are cured or no? Divine Condescension has no favourable Aspect we may suppose on Nonsubscribers. Nor has God any Concern about their Jealousies and Fears, nor any Design you should be guilty of the least Condescension for their Cure.

If this be indeed your Sense, I doubt you will make God a Respector of Persons. His Condescension is all in favour of Subscribers. For my Part, I cannot believe there is such manifest Partiality in him, towards one Side in the present Question.

BUT I am apt to think, the true Reason we hear not a Word of your Condescension for the Cure of our Fears, &c. was because this would not have been to your Purpose; for one cannot easily believe, you could over-look such a Turn of the Argument, which every one sees must stare you in the Face.

BUT how comes this Instance of divine Condescension, to concern the Debate between you and your nonsubscribing Brethren at all? Why you have Fears, and Jealousies, and Suspensions concerning them, and to these you are naturally prone.

prone. This, I confess, is grievous to hear; because I think it is no good Sign. Plain Men, who are conscious of meaning no ill *themselves*, are not commonly apt, I think, to suspect *others*. Sure I am, for I have the express Word of G O D for it, that *Charity thinketh no Evil, but believeth and hopeth all Things*, that good are, concerning others. But you may possibly be an honest charitable Man of a *peculiar Make*: And tho' naturally prone to be *very jealous* of others, may yet be well and charitably-minded towards *them*, and a Man of great Integrity in *your self*.

BUT have you *any Reason* for your Jealousies and Suspicions? No Matter for that. *We have infinitely less Reason to be jealous and suspicious of G O D, than of our Fellow-Creatures.* True. But what then? G O D has condescended to annex an Oath to his Promise, and therein to *do much more than was necessary, on Purpose* to cure us of our Jealousies and Suspicions as to him, and therefore we must do much more than is necessary, *on Purpose* to cure your Jealousies and Suspicions of us, *and subscribe*: At least you should think it *honourable Condescension* in us so to do.

BUT, good Sir, how does it appear that this Act of Condescension in G O D was *on Purpose* to cure Fears, Jealousies and Suspicions? I doubt you here talk without Book, and utter your own groundless Suppositions for Matters of Fact. Can you direct me to any one Text of Scripture, where this Account is given of *the Intention* of G O D, in this Instance of his Condescension? We read indeed that G O D * *to shew the Immutability of his Counsel*, or make it manifest that it was his unchangeable Purpose to make it good, *confirmed his Promise to Abraham with an Oath.* But do you any where read that this Oath was added to the Promise, *on Purpose* to cure Abraham's Jealousies and Suspicions that G O D might prove false, and his Promise fail? Is it not said expressly concerning him † *that he staggered not at the Promise, but being strong in Faith gave Glory to G O D, and was fully persuaded that, what was promised would be fulfilled?* And tho' it is added that this was done for the Benefit of the *Heirs of Salvation* in common, and that they who have fled for Refuge to lay hold of the Hope set before them *might have a strong Consolation*, doth this imply that it was *on Purpose* to cure Suspicions and Jealousies? May not those derive a *strong Consolation* from G O D's Oath, who yet have no Suspicions or Jealousies that he would fail of his Promise? But you suppose and take for granted, without any direct Au-

* Heb. vi. 13, 17, 18.

† Rom. iv. 20, 21.

thority from Scripture, that G O D swore to cure our Jealousies and Suspensions of *him*; and thence roundly conclude, we should subscribe, to cure your Jealousies of *us*. I think you should be very sure your *Proposition* is true, before you endeavour to fasten the *Assumption* on us.

Y E T admitting this to have been the *very Purpose* of G O D in this Condescension, and that he did more than was necessary (I suppose you mean more than *he was obliged*) with a *Design* to cure, &c. I hope he was *altogether voluntary* herein, and had *Liberty* to judge whether it was proper and consistent with all the Rights he was concerned to maintain, before he condescended so far to the Weakness of his jealous Creatures, as to confirm his Promise with an Oath. They did not first *demand* this Condescension for the Cure of their Jealousies, how much soever they needed it; and declare they would break off *all Correspondence*, and have no more to do with him, if he would not humour their Jealousies with such Condescension. If not, I cannot see how it will affect the *Nonsubscribers*, or at all suit their Case. They desire that this Condescension may *not be insisted on*, till themselves think it prudent and proper to subscribe. They beg they may not be menaced into it by their *weak Brethren*. The Measures taken by many of the *Subscribers* to defame them, their disowning and refusing to have to do with them, are very unlikely Means to soften them into a Compliance. They will never be clamoured out of *their Christian Liberty* by *weak Brethren*, who use them in so peevish, spiteful and unchristian a Manner. And verily they must be very *weak Brethren*, who, in the present State of Affairs, think this is the *proper way*, to have their Jealousies cured, by such *honourable Condescensions*.

B U T supposing this were an Instance of divine Conduct to be imitated by us on this Occasion, *how far* does our Obligation to condescend to *your Weakness* after the Example of G O D extend? He has given his Word, and added to that *his Oath*, and therein done *much more* than was *necessary* to cure his Creature's Jealousies. What then? Must *we* hereupon condescend to *subscribe* and *swear*, for the Cure of *yours*? I perceive you grow in your Demands. Once it was enough to subscribe, now we must not only subscribe, but ** pawn our Salvation* for the Truth of what we underwrite; and not only testify, but testify *upon Oath*, that *we are thoroughly in the Doctrine with you*. Had we not much Reason to be upon our Guard against your Demand of a Subscription? One Absurdity admitted draws

on a *Thousand*. And if we give up our Liberty in one Point, we are in a fair way of losing it *altogether*.

BUT it may be you would not carry the Matter this Length. You'll bate our being sworn. All you *insist on* is that, out of Condescension to your *Weakness*, we would do *more than is necessary* (I suppose you mean more than we are bound to do) *much more* than is necessary. Perhaps we may apprehend, we have already done *much more than is necessary*, to cure your Jealousies. The doing more might only feed instead of curing them. We have given you no just Occasion to be jealous. We are ready to subscribe to the Word of GOD as our Rule, and every Doctrine taught us therein. "This will not do, say you. *Heretics* will subscribe to the Scripture. Such Subscription is *no Security* that you are sound in the Faith" Nor your Subscription neither, or I am greatly mistaken. But are we bound to give you *farther Security*? By what Law or Authority will you fasten this Obligation upon us? I find you do not pretend to any, but because you are *weak*, and *naturally prone* to be jealous, we should condescend, and do *more, much more* than we are bound to do, for the Cure of your Jealousies. What then is the Security you must have? Why sign the *Article* and *Catechism*. And what if, after this is done, you should take up *another Suspicion*, that I have not signed in a sound Sense? Why then truly you'll crave Leave by the same Argument to frame a *Test* that the *Catechism* is rightly understood, as before that was a *Test*, that the *Scripture* was rightly understood. And this being done, you'll come and tell me, that as GOD has in great Condescension to our common Weakness, done *more than was necessary*, to cure our Jealousies, you hope I will go on, and sign your *new Test*: And so *toties quoties*: And thus you may proceed in *infinitum*, or, which, for any thing I know, may be all one, to the End of Mr. Reynolds's Jealousies. And this you tell us you should count an *honourable* Condescension. Doubtless, whilst your *Turn* may be served by it. But would you have it in the same Account, when turned against you?

SUPPOSE I should take it into my Head, that all this grave and solemn Rhetoric of yours is mere Grimace and Artifice, and proceeds not so much from Concern for the Truth, as a *Love to Pre-eminence*, an Affectation of *Dominion*, and some little *Greediness* for filthy Lucre. You know Jealousies and Suspicions are Things to which we are *naturally prone*, and if they get into our Heads who can help it? Some Allowance must be made for a *Bro-*

ther's Weakness. And possibly we have as good Reason to suspect you of all these, as you have to suspect *any of † us* of Unsoundness as to the Trinity. Suppose now, with these Jealousies I should come to you, and tell you that God in *Condescension* to our *Weakness*, and on *Purpose* to cure our *Jealousies*, &c. has done *much more* than was *necessary*, and confirmed his Promise with an Oath; I hope therefore that in Condescension to my Weakness, and to remove my Fears and Jealousies, you will (seeing you *may do it without Sin*, and it is lawful to take an Oath) give me your Oath. Would you take me to be *in earnest* in such a Proposal? Or if you did, would you without Hesitation or Delay comply with it, and *honourably condescend* to give me this Satisfaction? Would you not first expostulate with me, require *the Grounds* of my Jealousies and Suspicions, and enquire whether they were *reasonable or no*? But, *no Matter for that*, say I. Jealousies and Suspicions of the great God, are infinitely *more unreasonable* than mine can be, and yet he condescends to our *common Weakness*, I desire therefore, and *insist* upon it, that you do so to mine. You may *pity* my Weakness herein, but pray do not *disturb* or *grieve* me by Refusals or Delays. Would you think there was any Force in this Argument, or that the Instance is properly applied? And because God has confirmed his Promise with an Oath, therefore you must cure my Jealousies and Suspicions, whether just and reasonable or no, in the same Manner? I hardly think you are *so weak* a Brother as this.

BUT, for Argument's sake, permit me to suppose, you would hereupon use this *honourable Condescension*. What if, as soon as you have done it, a new Fit of Jealousy should seize me, and it should be suggested to my Thoughts, that *one who is so free to swear will deceive*. And should hereupon come again, and tell you, you have indeed purged your self upon Oath of what I suspected, but I am so far from being rid of my *former Jealousy* thereby, that I am possessed of a *new one*, and fear you have *deceived me*. As therefore God has done more than he was obliged, to cure our common Jealousies, pray imitate this Condescension, and in pity to my Weakness *swear over* again, and let the Oath be conceived in more *plain, strong* and *unexceptionable* Terms. Would you yield to the Force of this Argument, or fly in the Face of him that offers it? Could you take it otherwise than as a Banter on you, and an Insult on

† viz. Ministers, in and about this City, at this Time, who declined the signing your Roll at Salter's-Hall, and went on with the Business then properly before us.

Religion? And yet, in my Opinion, one Egg is not more like another, than this way of arguing, and yours, from this Instance of divine Condescension.

BE intreated therefore to take some other way *for the Cure* of your Jealousies and Suspicions. Or if they must be cured in your *own way* only, be pleased to search out some more proper Arguments; for these are not likely to prevail on us to *subscribe*.

WE hope we could in reasonable Things condescend as far as any of our Brethren; but we cannot give up our *Judgments*, our *Principles* and our *Christian Liberty*, because they tell us they are *weak*, and for that Reason must be *so far* humoured. We cannot but be apprehensive that those who plead Weakness to *carry their Point*, would exert their Power when they *had carried it*. And those who insist on Subscription in *one Point*, because they are weak, would carry their Demands much farther, when they had out-grown their Weakness, and got sufficient Power. Spiritual Power has in all Ages been of a very encroaching Nature, and has in many Ages and Places devoured civil and religious Liberty too. You cannot wonder therefore, when all Men, as you suggest, are naturally prone to Jealousies, that *we* should have *some* on this Head: Or that we, who for the sake of Christian Liberty, and the Religion of the Bible, have renounced all the Advantages of a *legal Establishment*, are loth to give up our Christian Liberty into the Hands of *any*, who stand upon the *same Foot* with us.

IF you apprehend any thing in this Letter has been *too freely* said, I beg you would consider we have been long silent under gross Criminations and Abuses, and made no Returns. We have been pursued with bitter *Invectives*, and that in your *Prayers* as well as *Sermons*, and set forth to the People (who, *in the Simplicity of their Hearts*, believe all that their godly zealous Ministers say without Examination) as *Haters* of God, and *bated* by him. What *you* suspect, *they* are made to believe. *We* are represented as *Monsters*, and *they* are frightened out of their Wits. These are Injuries of which we have not been ignorant; we have sometimes been Ear-Witnesses to them, though, blessed be God, we have not made it our Endeavour to repay. We can appeal to our Consciences, our Hearers, to Him *who knows all Things*, that we have not made it *the Business*, nor *any Part* of the Business of our public Ministrations, to say any thing disadvantageous to the Character of our jealous Brethren, nor to stir up the Wrath of our *Hearers* against them; and in private we have many Times endeavoured to cool and keep down

Shewn their Resentments. We have looked on upon the Hurt done to our *common Interests*, and what is worse, to the *few Remains* of serious Religion amongst us, with bleeding Hearts. We have shewn our selves ready to *come to a Temper* with our Brethren, and have long waited in Hope to see your Fervour spend it self. But as there is little Prospect of this as to some of you (we bless God that it is not so with all) and you go on to accuse and reproach us, and take all Occasions to do so, though the most *improper* and *unnatural*, you must not be surprized, if we vindicate our selves; and to do this, lay fairly before the World those Things you may not be fond to hear. If this displeases, you must consider who have given Provocation, and must be answered, it seems, *according to themselves*. It is from no Pleasure I have in ripping up old Sores, nor a *Love of Contention*, that I have drawn up these Sheets. My Principles and Temper are both peaceable and friendly, if I rightly understand them. But the Usage we have had from *you*, and *some others* of our Brethren, is such, that we must be stupid if we don't *resent* it, and I do not see but it is likely to be continued, if we do not *shew* our Resentment. This is *my Reason*, or, if it must be so, *my Excuse*, for any *Freedoms* you may not like in this Letter.

HOWEVER, I hope we shall never carry our Resentments beyond the Bounds of Reconciliation, upon Christian and Reasonable Terms. I will say for *my self*, and I will undertake for my Brethren, that if you will let your Wrath subside, will give way to no Jealousies in *your selves*, nor stir up, or encourage any in *the People*, without a *just and known Foundation*, will cease to cry down all for *Heretics*, who cannot think all fit to be done which you do, will use your Brethren as you would be used by them, and let us with united Hands and Hearts, endeavour to *revive* and *promote*, practical Religion and the Power of Godliness, we'll overlook what is past, and receive and embrace you as Brethren.

BUT if you are resolved to *continue* in a *State of War* with us, till you have brought us to do what you would have us, though we shall not cease praying to God to give you a better Spirit, nor forbear to watch over our own, yet you must not blame us, if sometimes we rise up in our own Defence, resolved to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free* against Reproaches and Encroachments; and if, in so doing, we say some Things you will not care to hear, you must *thank* your selves, and *bear* with us. In the mean Time I am with sincere Good-will,

Reverend Sir, your humble Servant,

SIMON BROWNE.

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

A *Second Impression* of this Letter being called for, I thought good to Revise it, before it went to the Press. Many Things I understand, have been said against it, of which it is proper *some Notice* should be taken.

It hath been charg'd with *Falseness* in *Facts*: To which I have to say, That I am conscious of no *wilful Falsification*; and I have made it my Endeavour to be *well* and *truly* inform'd, in whatever I have written upon Report of *Others*. Yet after all, if it shall be made appear, that, in any particular, I have been wrong, I shall make no Difficulty, I hope, to own a Mistake, nor be unwilling, to *make Reparation*, as far as I can, to any who may have been *injured* thereby. I

I have also been charged with *Fallacy* in *arguing*. But sure I am, it hath been with no *Intention* to *deceive*: I may have been impos'd upon my self, by a *Shew* of Argument, without substance or strength. *Humanum est errare*. But, I hope, I can sincerely say, I shall be thankful to *any*, who will shew me my Mistakes, and freely and gladly *retract*, what I am not able to *defend*.

BUT on both these Heads, I am apt to think, some of my Readers have misunderstood me, whether through my Fault or *their own*, I will not take upon me to say. But to prevent such Mistakes for the future; I have now thrown some *Hints* into the *Margin*, to render my Meaning more explicit, if possible. This I thought would appear more fair, than to make any *considerable* Alteration in the *body* of the *Letter*. This remains as it was, without any material Change (besides the Corrections of the Press) except in *p. 10.* where though I have not departed from the *former Sense*, yet because I have varied the *Phrase*, and enlarged somewhat, on the *Argument*, I hear thought fit to enclose it in Brackets, which the Reader will also find, where any thing occurs, that hath the *least Appearance* of a material Alteration.

I have been much blamed by some, for endeavouring to *destroy* the *Reputation* of my Reverend Brother, and set him forth to the World as a *very Ill-Man*.

AND Reputation, I own, is a very dear and tender Point. When a Man suffers in it, he is touched to the *Quick*. I wish some who appear tender enough of *their own*, had been somewhat more merciful to *that* of *their Brethren*. Yet do I not plead this in Excuse of Guilt. Injury received, will not justify a Return. *Evil should be overcome with Good*. I should have rejoiced if this might have been. For my own part, I can say it has been heartily endeavour'd.

But I plead *not guilty*, to this Charge. I am misunderstood, if any thing I have said to Mr. Reynolds, be construed into *so bad* a Meaning. Indeed, in several things, I have thought him very *culpable*. Others, his *old* and *true* Friends, have been of the same Opinion. And, could the good Advice of such have corrected his Conduct; he had never heard from me; nor I believe any other, in this Way.----But I am far from thinking every one, who in an *Hour* of *Temptation*, and under the Impulses of an *imaginary Zeal* for GOD, does some *ill-Things*, must therefore be pronounced an *Ill-Man*, and *one left of GOD*. Woeto us all, if, by this measure, GOD should judge us.

I have also been charged with a *Severity* and *Keeness* in Writing, no way agreeable to my *Temper*.----And what if I own this Charge, and that this manner of writing is rather the result of *Judgment* than *Inclination*. I can assure my Readers, that the Letter had been much sooner in the Press, had I drawn it up, or published it after it was drawn up, in an *Heat*. And if any thing in it seem severe, let me have leave to say, *Was there not a Cause*? I am sure, I *thought* there was, and think so *still*, and am content to leave this matter to the Judgment of the impartial World. None will have greater Pleasure than I, if the Conduct of our Brethren, shall render every thing of *this kind*, for the future, unnecessary. I wish there may be no mutual Provocations amongst us any more, but to *Love* and *good Works*. In this good Wish, my *Judgment* and *Inclination* both concur.

I have also been much blamed, for making *Heretics* of some of my *Subscribing Brethren*.----But sure every Reader I think, may see, that I am very tender of fixing the Brand of *Heresy* on *any*. And I am here free to own, that the Trade of *Heretic-making*, has in my  
Account,

Account, been one of the worst *Heresies* that ever infested the Christian Church. It is what I utterly dislike in *Others*, and therefore, I hope, shall never allow in *my self*.---But those who are forward to make this Charge, frame Tests to *detect* Heretics, and are full of Resentment against all who will not fall into *their* Measures, should be very sure, I think, that *Themselves* are untainted. And where this is not the Case, but there appear, what in *common Account*, are Signs of Infection, if I whisper any in the Ear, *Medice cura te ipsum*, I am sure it is no ill *Advice*, however it be taken.

BUT the hardest Charge against me is, that I am guilty of *Profanefs*, nay, *little less than Blasphemy*; and this by some, who should know better, and from whom it would be very surprizing, did I not know the power of *Passion* and *Prejudice*.---But on what is this Charge founded? Two *very harmless* Passages (as I still think) have been markt out to support this Outcry. One is, that upon an Occasion, which to me, appeared not a little ridiculous, I changed the Phrase *latest Posterity*, into *the Tip of the Tail of Time*. But I am so dull, that I cannot discover wherein the Profanefs of this Variation lies.---Is it because *latest Posterity* is a *sacred Phrase*, and has such a Meaning always annexed to it, as upon no Occasion may be jocularly express'd? Were this the Case, there would be some Colour for the Charge. But it doth not yet appear to me to be so. Or is it because I represent Time as *having a Tail*, and that with a *Tip* to it? But what more Profanefs is there in this, than in representing it as having an Head

+ *All bald behind, with one full Lock before?* And yet from time immemorial, thus hath *old Time* been figured, without any Charge of *Profanefs* on Writers, Painters or Statuaries, that ever I heard of.

THE other Instance is that I speak of some People as *telling Tales* of their Brethren to GOD Almighty. By which I mean, their bringing either *trifling*, or *untrue*, or *spiteful* Complaints to him against them. This in common Speech, is *telling Tales*. If all concerned can clear themselves of *the Fact*, I shall hardly trust my own Ears, or the Report of the most *capable* and *credible* Ear Witnesses again. But *the Fact* being admitted, wherein is the Profanefs of calling it by *this Name*? Why, "in speaking of *Words uttered in Prayer*, as telling "Tales, and thereby turning *so sacred a Thing* as Prayer into *Ridicule*. "This is the Charge, as I apprehend, in its utmost Strength".----But, in good Earnest, are *all Words* uttered in Prayer, rendered *so sacred thereby*, that they must be called by none but *honourable Names*? Prayer *in it self* is doubtless a very holy Thing, but this notwithstanding, some Prayers are wicked and abominable. May not these be *so called*, without any *Reproach* or *Intention* of Reproach, on Prayer *it self*? And Men truly Pious and Devout may *incautiously* drop Expressions in Prayer, favouring of much *Passion* and *human Weakness*. Why must the calling these by a *proper Name* be deemed Profaneness? Are the *Faults* and *Follies* of our Holy Things, made *Sacred*, by *corrupting* them? I am sincerely grieved, that any Thing of this Nature should have been suggested, because the Censure will fall *heaviest* where it was *least* design'd. For if there be Profaneness in the Case, it will rather be in *such Prayers*, than in calling such Prayers by a *proper Name*. And the Way to turn Prayer into *Ridicule*, is not by *exploding* such Blemishes to it, but by making the *Sacredness* of the Thing it self give a *Sanction* to them.

+ *Fronte capillatâ, post est Occasio calva:*

F I N I S.